

University of Massachusetts Amherst

ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst

Doctoral Dissertations

Dissertations and Theses

5-8-2020

WRITING AGAINST HISTORY: FEMINIST BAROQUE NARRATIVES IN INTERWAR ATLANTIC MODERNISM

Annaliese Hoehling

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2



Part of the [Literature in English, Anglophone outside British Isles and North America Commons](#),
[Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#), and the [Literature in English, North America Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hoehling, Annaliese, "WRITING AGAINST HISTORY: FEMINIST BAROQUE NARRATIVES IN INTERWAR ATLANTIC MODERNISM" (2020). *Doctoral Dissertations*. 1932.
https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2/1932

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations and Theses at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.

**WRITING AGAINST HISTORY: FEMINIST BAROQUE NARRATIVES IN
INTERWAR ATLANTIC MODERNISM**

A Dissertation Presented

by

ANNALIESE D. HOEHLING

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2020

Department of English

© Copyright by Annaliese D. Hoehling 2020

All Rights Reserved

**WRITING AGAINST HISTORY: FEMINIST BAROQUE NARRATIVES IN
INTERWAR ATLANTIC MODERNISM**

A Dissertation Presented

by

ANNALIESE D. HOEHLING

Approved as to style and content by:

Laura Doyle, Chair

Stephen Clingman, Member

Ruth Jennison, Member

Karen Kurczynski, Member

Randall Knoper, Department Head
Department of English

DEDICATION

For my Mama, who taught me empathy and how art can help one survive.
And to Steve, for everything, but especially for recognizing me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project represents investments beyond intellectual production, and I am not the only person who made these investments. I would like to thank Laura Doyle, my Chair and advisor throughout my time at UMass. It was her course on *Modernism and Global Studies* that introduced me to a Spanish novel from Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier, which opened the door for me to the possibilities of baroque modernism in a global context. I walked through that door, and Laura has been a resource as well as a champion for my project ever since. Throughout my research and writing, there have been times when I needed clear guidance and times when I needed the space and trust to explore. Laura provided both. I also wish to express gratitude to members of my committee: Stephen Clingman, whose influence on my trajectory with baroque modernism has also been crucial, and whose feedback on writing as well as encouragement when I most needed it has been valuable throughout coursework, exams, and dissertation. Ruth Jennison has been that important voice, from exams through the dissertation, to ask key questions that push me to work harder. And I thank Karen Kurczynski, who not only added a necessary disciplinary perspective from Art History but also has been a generous reader with transformative insights—I could not have hoped for a more effective and helpful addition to the committee.

I am also appreciative of the opportunities and support provided by the English Department and the Graduate School at UMass, including Travel Grants to attend conferences to present developing research, a Dissertation Fellowship to focus on writing, and a Dissertation Research Grant, which funded a trip to London in 2018. There, the archivists at the Royal Academy of Art and the Tate helped make the

internationalist and nationalist endeavors during the interwar years come alive through the documents of exhibit organizers. I extend particular appreciation to co-panelists and conference attendees who have helped foster earlier stages of some of these ideas, especially the collegial communities I have found through the Space Between Society and the International Virginia Woolf Society, whose scholarly support extends far beyond annual conferences. I also thank the reviewers and editors at the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* and the *Journal of Modern Literature* for shepherding my research and writing on baroque modernism.

Many faculty in the English Department played official and unofficial support and advocacy roles throughout my time at UMass, and I wish to especially thank Suzanne Daly, who has always provided the most useful advice for professionalization and has been a beacon for my cohort ever since our first semester in her *Theorizing the Discipline* course; as well as Asha Nadkarni, Rachel Mordecai, and Jane Hwang Degenhardt, for supporting and advocating for graduate students in our teaching and student—not to mention our human—roles. I also thank departmental staff who provide so much support for all of us, especially Wanda Bak, Patty O'Neill, and Tom Racine. And I thank my colleagues and students at UMass who have learned with me. It was in the classroom where I often found the questions, insights, and desire to understand our complicated social contexts that reminded me why any of us do this kind of work.

I want to especially thank my friends and colleagues who have become another kind of family. Sharing meals and tears as well as writing and teaching advice and support—and laughs, lots of laughs—has been key to surviving this journey. Joshua Barszczewski, Bo Jimenez, Marlene Perez, Joy Hayward-Jansen, Nirmala Iswari, Kate

Perillo, Michelle Brooks, and many, many more. I want to especially thank Saumya Lal, whose generosity, friendship, and keen reader skills I just could not do without. And to Benjamin Zender and Anna-Claire Simpson Steffen, there just aren't enough words to express my appreciation for your love and fierce friendship, not to mention your talents and geniuses, which inspire me.

And to my other family, which has loved and supported me through the various paths I have taken, even (or especially) when my path may not have made sense to you: thank you.

ABSTRACT

WRITING AGAINST HISTORY: FEMINIST BAROQUE NARRATIVES IN INTERWAR ATLANTIC MODERNISM

MAY 2020

ANNALIESE D. HOEHLING, B.A., HENDERSON STATE UNIVERSITY

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

M.F.A., UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Laura Doyle

In the decades following the end of the Great War, paranoia and panic about survival and sovereign control were driven by unprecedented death tolls from war, disease, and economic disaster as well as by revolutionary agitation around the globe. This fear was channeled into policing gender, sexuality, and race; and the parameters of white, middle-class womanhood were weaponized for social control in the transatlantic imaginary. In this study, I identify two rhetorical-political figures that helped to shape this imagination: Surplus Women and Trafficked Women. In my analysis of the literature, these figures help to contrast domestic scenes, on one hand, where the integration and fortification of national and racial identities is secured through white, middle-class, reproductive womanhood, with, on the other hand, the transience and mobility of threatening or transformative sexuality and racial ambiguity. *Writing Against History* therefore attends to narrative form as well as the political imaginary of gender and race in order to consider how women's experimental writing participates in constructing or resisting national and colonial imagination. This dissertation argues that baroque aesthetics, recuperated and reculturated at the turn of the twentieth-century, aestheticize a tension between

incommensurable forces, including life and death, pleasure and pain, love and fear. Focusing on four novels by modernist women from English, Anglo-Irish, American-Expatriate, and British-Creole contexts, I define a feminist baroque aesthetic potential in modernist narratives that do not simply resist but renegotiate the terms of white, middle-class womanhood forged by colonial-patriarchy. In their open and ambiguous narrative forms, feminist baroque narratives point to an ongoing individual and collective responsibility to recognize the narratives and social forms that demand or force certain visions of a future contingent on sexual, racial, and economic exploitation. This study's juxtaposition of feminist baroque aesthetics and the interwar historical context reorganizes and renegotiates the relationships between texts, readers, and modernism, as well as between subjects, nations, and war. The interwar period, in this baroque modernist context, is re-seen as its own vanishing point that, like a baroque fold, can introduce imagined possibilities as well as a self-consciousness of personal responsibility in relation to those possibilities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
ABSTRACT.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiii
INTRODUCTION: MODERNIST WOMEN AND FEMINIST BAROQUE AESTHETICS.....	1
 CHAPTER	
1. THE BAROQUE 'INDUCTION' AND VIRGINIA WOOLF'S <i>BETWEEN THE ACTS</i>	55
The Elizabethan Induction and Woolf's Genealogy of Aesthetic Engagement.....	59
Baroque Aesthetics and <i>Between the Acts</i>	70
<i>Between the Acts</i> and Performative Language.....	84
Feminist Baroque Aesthetics and Critical Engagement.....	90
Community and Failure: The Responsibility of Engagement.....	98
 2. BAROQUE RUINS IN ELIZABETH BOWEN'S <i>THE LAST SEPTEMBER</i>	 103
A Colonial Un-encounter and Vying Narratives for Ireland	114
Ruins and Recognition: Failure of the Colonial Relationship	123
The Modernism of "Crossing-Arches"	137
 3. BAROQUE BODIES AND DJUNA BARNES'S <i>NIGHTWOOD</i>	 147
Frau Mann and the 'Lesson of Barbette'	155
War in the Gap, and the Recuperative Function of Baroque Bodies	166
The Art of Truth: beast turning human turning beast turning . . .	188
 4. BAROQUE VOIDS IN JEAN RHYS'S <i>GOOD MORNING, MIDNIGHT</i>	 192

The “lavabo” and Narrative Entrapment.....	198
The Doppelganger and Narrative Alienation	205
The Washing-up Closet and Narrative Risk	218
“Yes—yes—yes”: Embracing Intersubjectivity and Feminist Baroque Indeterminacy	223
CONCLUSION: NEGOTIATING LOVE.....	241
BIBLIOGRAPHY	255

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
Figure 1: <i>The New York Herald</i> . 26 March 1922.....	6
Figure 2: Google Books Ngram: “Baroque” 1800-2000..	35
Figure 3: Holbein’s <i>The Ambassadors</i> (1533).....	45
Figure 4: Close-up and changed perspective of the anamorphic skull in the foreground of Holbein’s painting.....	45
Figure 5: “Barbette Dressing,” Man Ray, 1926.	164
Figure 6: Exposition Internationale Paris 1937, view of German and Russian pavilions.	204
Figure 7: Close-up, <i>Ecstasy of St. Teresa</i> by Bernini, 1647-1652.....	243
Figure 8: Cornaro Chapel, Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome.	243

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BA	<i>Between the Acts</i>
GMM	<i>Good Morning, Midnight</i>
LS	<i>The Last September</i>
N	<i>Nightwood</i>

INTRODUCTION: MODERNIST WOMEN AND FEMINIST BAROQUE

AESTHETICS

"By its very essence classicism was not permitted to behold the lack of freedom, the imperfection, the collapse of the physical, beautiful, nature. But beneath its extravagant pomp, this is precisely what baroque allegory proclaims, with unprecedented emphasis" (Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama 176).

"Being against something is also being for something, but something that has yet to be articulated or is not yet" (Ahmed, The Cultural Politics of Emotion 175).

Unruly Women of the Interwar Period: Surplus Women and Trafficked Women

In 1921, the United Kingdom conducted its first census since the Great War, and its results were scrutinized for the generational impact the war had on a nation. The number of deaths and missing persons attributed to the 1914-1918 war in Europe range from eight to over ten million, with Great Britain recording around one million military deaths.¹ In addition to military casualties, the period also saw an additional five million deaths across Europe attributable either to conditions related to the war, or to other civil wars and unrest (Gerwarth 1-2). The vast majority of these deaths were of men, so one of the key details of the 1921 census that newspaper editors scrutinized was the large gap between the number of females and males counted in the British population. The 1921 census reported nearly two million *more women than men* in the population of Great Britain following the war, and the phrase "Surplus Women" appeared repeatedly in British newspaper columns and letters to the editor in August and September of that year,

¹ Wikipedia table, "World War I Casualties."

and continued to appear in newspapers in Europe and abroad for the next several years.² This was not a new phrase; it already had traction as a popular social label for a growing class of women in modern Britain. The term “surplus women” had emerged in the social debates of the previous century after the 1851 census reported for the first time not only basic population numbers but finer details about “the age, sex, and ‘conjugal condition’ of the population,” finding that there were “approximately 400,000 women” who would, demographically, never gain marital status because of the gap between females and males in the British population (Worsnop 22). This demographical gap became associated with the economic and emigration practices of the British Empire and globalization of the period, since more British men than women emigrated to colonies and dominions for work.³

The 1851 census report contributed to this theory by comparing the ratio of men to women in the British population to populations in the colonies and in the United States, where the ratio of males to females was reversed. The subsequent census in 1861 saw a similar gap between sexes, and the report explicitly concluded that “the excess of the emigration of males over females accounts for the present difference in the proportion of the sexes” (qtd. in Worsnop 23). Significantly, the term “surplus women” did *not* refer to working-class women; the 1851 census also reported employment data, and while those employed in textile industries or in domestic service might have included

2 Ivy Compton-Burnett’s 1933 novel, *More Women Than Men*, uses this social predicament as a backdrop for power struggles between men and women within extended family structures, between working single women and leisured men, and as an allusion to the pervasiveness of homosexuality among men and women. The title and narrative imply both interpretations: there are more women *because* men choose other men; but, also, *because* there are more women than men, women will couple with other women.

3 As Worsnop and others note, the alarm about the imbalance between women and men in the population was shaped in conjunction with other social concerns of the era and was not informed by a historical sense of the gender balance, as there was no comparable data about the makeup of the population in terms of marital and employment status of women.

unmarried women, popular rhetoric assigned the term “surplus” to those women who were not only unmarried but unemployed. Thus, “surplus women” came to label unmarried, middle-class British women.⁴ The term was used by both conservatives and progressive activists around women’s issues in the following decades of the nineteenth century. On one hand, women cited the census statistics and used the negatively charged label to advocate for increased rights and access for middle-class women to education and professional positions. Others, such as the businessman and social theorist William Rathbone Greg, who played on the economics of the term, advocated for increased emigration of middle-class women to colonies and dominions, particularly Canada.⁵

The unprecedented death toll of World War One had significantly increased the demographical gap between the sexes by the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, however, and popular and political concern surged again in 1921, this time intensified by both a significant increase in the demographic imbalance and the devastating nature of its context: war, and war-related health and economic factors. Something must be done about the Surplus Women Problem, many letters to editors argued, including this anonymous letter to the London *Times* on August 25, 1921:

Look at it how one will, there must remain for more than a generation a far larger surplus of women than could have well existed in the natural course of events. Time must indeed largely redress the balance; but in the immediate future every consideration of woman's position in the nation's life will be profoundly affected.

4 See Kathrin Levitan’s 2008 article, “Redundancy, the ‘Surplus Woman’ Problem, and the British Census, 1851-1861.” As Levitan and Worsnop both discuss, the census reports contributed statistical data to confirm conservative arguments already in circulation about the need to define and control the role of women in a rapidly changing society.

5 Greg’s 1862 treatise, *Why are Women Redundant?* was the most influential of these arguments, directly referencing the census data and the problem of “surplus women,” using the language of economics to argue that “surplus women” should be compelled to emigrate and reproduce with men in the colonies. See Worsnop, pp. 27-28.

The question of “woman’s position in the nation’s life” as a result of her new status of being somehow in *excess* of her natural and civic roles loomed large in the popular imagination of this era.

The census report and economic language of “surplus” offered those who had anxieties about changing power dynamics—domestically and internationally, intimately and publicly—something to grasp onto. We see it referenced in Virginia Woolf’s post-WWI novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, when the conservative Lady Bruton asks Richard Dalloway and Hugh Whitbread over to lunch to help her compose a letter to the editor of the *London Times* about “superfluous youth” who, she argues, should be sent to Canada (107). This is no doubt a sly reference to the many “surplus women” editorials in the *Times* following the 1921 census, like the one excerpted above. Bruton’s letter and all the other “surplus women” letters incorporate multiple contemporary anxieties about destabilizing trends regarding the classes, global empire, and political and economic control.

What these evolving debates about “Surplus Women” announce is a kind of racial panic. Especially in the contexts of war, economic transformations, social agitations, and political clashes, the census data and economic language about demographics are indicators of mortality. This dissertation traces that panic through narrative representation of and resistance to coercions of intimacies that would force a certain kind of future.⁶

⁶ Lisa Lowe uses the term “intimacies” to refer to “the global processes and colonial connections that are the conditions of its production” and to “emphasize a constellation of asymmetrical and unevenly legible ‘intimacies’ . . . in relation to a global geography that one more often conceives in terms of vast spatial distances” (18). This study considers this global-colonial production and coercion of economic intimacies as being reinforced in, and often emanating from, the biopolitics of gender control and argues that feminist baroque aesthetics suspend and aestheticize the vastness and the intimacies of this “constellation” in both bodies and textual forms.

This study will argue that baroque aesthetics, recuperated and reculturated at the turn of the twentieth-century, aestheticize a tension between incommensurable forces, including life and death, pleasure and pain, love and fear. Focusing on four novels by modernist women from English, Anglo-Irish, American-Expatriate, and British-Creole contexts and set primarily in Europe in the decades following the Great War, I will define a feminist baroque aesthetic potential in modernist narratives that do not simply resist but renegotiate the terms of white, middle-class womanhood. These texts' investments in and critiques of the constructions of white womanhood are entangled with the interwar psyche of survival and paranoia.⁷

The popular debates following the 1921 census also allowed for sociological profiling of the various “types” of Surplus Women, predicting or cataloging pathological outcomes for those women who were deprived of domestic offices (wife and motherhood) and thus would turn to homosexuality, alcoholism, asexuality, and promiscuity as a result (see Figure 1). In other words, after the reports and debates surrounding the 1921 census, any behavior that seemed to diverge from traditional heteronormative domesticity or interfere with the maintenance of a nuclear family could be considered a direct result of the shift in balance between the sexes, thereby associated with the war and colonial efforts in unpatriotic terms. This framing of women's national duty could also be seen as a recalibration of the new freedoms and rights suffragists and feminists argued for and were beginning to achieve. The very visible contributions of women during the war, which for feminists demonstrated women's potential social

⁷ Paul Saint-Amour's theory of the “interwar” period as a psychically defined space is influential for my study. He argues that, in the decades after the Great War, “the memory of one world war was already joined to the specter of a second, future one, framing the period in real time as an *interwar* whose terminus in global conflict seemed . . . foreordained” (*Tense Future* 7)

equality and social value beyond the domestic sphere, would have been perceived as an incursion into masculine territories by others. In other words, the resurgence of the Surplus Woman “problem” after the 1921 census reports could point to unmarried and independent middle-class women as a threat to civil—and thus national and imperial—order.⁸ Couched in economic rather than military terminology, the image of “Surplus Women” nevertheless announced a kind of demographic and political battle based on gender, class, race, and sexual reproduction.



Figure 1: *The New York Herald*. 26 March 1922. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045774/1922-03-26/ed-1/seq-100/>. The illustrations are labeled to correspond to the article’s catalog of various Surplus Women “types,” such as “The reformer” and “The bachelor girls who put up together.”

⁸ For recent examinations of the structural racism that assumes and reinforces that the middle class in both British and American contexts constitutes white identity, see Meghji, *Black Middle Class Britannia*, and Johnson, unpublished dissertation, *Whitewashed: The Racialization of America’s Middle Class Identity*.

Already in 1919 however, perhaps in early recognition of the war's impact on the population—or to capitalize on the crisis of war—the Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women (SOSBW) was established and remained active through 1962. The emigration strategy addressed not only the “surplus women” issue at home but the changing dynamics of empire following the war: women would be needed abroad to help shore up Great Britain's global empire. As Jean Smith has recently argued, the SOSBW played an important role in social engineering the imperial project, and its work from the interwar period to its cessation after the Second World War demonstrated “the ways in which travel to the Empire could provide both new freedoms for women and new restrictions when they were charged as the guardians of racial purity” (521). So-called Surplus Women were thus fashioned in popular imagination to be both the cause and the cure for the destabilization of a global colonial-patriarchal order, threatening reproductive decline and social agitation on one hand, or symbolizing the expansion of the white race across the globe as a “civilizing” force for Empire, on the other.⁹

At the same time that single middle-class women were designated as *surplus* and being targeted for export, however, another social issue captured the attention of women's groups in the decade after the Great War: the trafficking of women and minors as prostitutes. While narratives of the “White Slave Trade” had circulated as a cautionary tale for women since the nineteenth century, new attention to sex trafficking and prostitution in the first decades of the twentieth century was driven by multiple factors in

⁹ See Smith's article for more discussion of the social engineering role of emigration societies such as SOSBW, especially her documentation of rhetoric regarding fears of miscegenation in the colonies and the organization's selective practices to ensure that “suitable” women were recruited for settler colonial purposes (528).

Europe and North America.¹⁰ These factors included the increased freedoms and mobility for middle-class women, as well as changes in the populations and visibility of not only women but also immigrants, displaced persons from the Great War and other conflicts, and, in the United States, African Americans moving from southern agricultural regions to northern, more populous, industrial regions during the Great Migration. In the US in particular, the term “white slavery” not only distinguished the sex trade from the African slave trade but also helped to shape narratives that performed social constructions such as “whiteness, sexual morality, class, and citizenship” (Donavan 56, see also Bromfield 130). The social imaginary power of “trafficked women” flips the coin on the “surplus women” image: on one side is the pristine, colonial-patriarchal potential of white womanhood, on the other is the damaged remains of colonial-patriarchal disorder, which might also include racial ambiguity due to ambiguous national identities and miscegenation. Both images serve to establish economic and national parameters for women’s patriotic sexuality and legitimate mobility.

On both sides of the Atlantic, the salaciousness of the White Slave Trade consolidated social anxieties about the increasing presence of middle-class women in public spaces, as well as the visibility of colonial or racialized “others” in metropolitan centers. In the same year as the first post-war census, the newly established League of Nations convened conferences on the issue of international sex trade. The League worked with existing women’s groups to continue international legislative means to address

10 See Celia Marshik’s 1999 article for an extended discussion of Virginia Woolf’s references to the White Slave Trade. Marshik argues that Woolf transformed the prostitution tropes of the age into metaphors about her own professional endeavors, on one hand, but also directly referenced prostitution and the White Slave Trade in her novels *The Voyage Out* and *Jacob’s Room*. There, according to Marshik, Woolf criticizes the moralizing and racial fearmongering of these tropes designed “for keeping middle-class women confined to marriage, maternity, and feminine occupations” (864).

prostitution, but it was the commissioning of a new, systematic investigation which characterizes the shift in policies and awareness on this issue. In 1927, a landmark study by the League documented “the allied problems of prostitution and transport of women and girls from one country to another” (Harris ix). Focusing on the trafficking between Europe, North Africa, South America, and North America, the study identified “state-regulated prostitution” as a target for reform (Piley 90-91). The study was the first ever to systematically document prostitution as the exploitation of particular populations at an international level, extending to twenty-eight nations.

Importantly, the study focused statistical attention not on the morality of “fallen women” or even on the threat of “foreign men,” the protagonists and villains of the white slave trade myths.¹¹ Rather, the study found that “regulated prostitution served to exploit women’s sexuality for the gain of men and the state” (Piley 91). This refers to the “morality” policing of women that existing regulations encouraged and critics claimed targeted and punished already vulnerable women; the report also acknowledged that existing regulations regarding prostitution did not sufficiently discourage third party actors from profiteering, nor did current policies extend any kind of protections to the many prostitutes who worked outside of regulated houses or districts. The study identified, in other words, the systemic economic and legal conditions which coerce and sustain prostitution, rather than individual moral failings.

In the 1928 summary of the League’s report written by Wilson Harris, however, some of the familiar “White Slave Trade” tropes were used to position Great Britain and

¹¹ One of the first official acts of the League’s commission on the issue of prostitution was to establish the term “traffic” to replace the various terms used such as “white slavery” or “white slave trade.” See Knepper, note 26, p. 53.

North America as minor players in sex trafficking, pointing to their strict immigration laws and existing strength of anti-prostitution legislation as models that might be replicated in other nations. Like the Surplus Women debates, then, the international issue of women trafficking provided opportunities for shoring up rhetoric and policies that served not only women's civil rights interests but also imperial interests, especially those imperial interests which were harmed by the devastating example of the "masculine ethos of empire" that culminated in the Great War (Gorman 193). While the women's groups' attention to sex trafficking resulted in new awareness and legislation around the systematic exploitation of women, their work could also be criticized for perpetuating the *noblesse oblige* mentality that enables hierarchical dominance over colonized people and territories. Paul Knepper argues that the League's commission to address prostitution at the international scale set a precedent to establish international "sociological jurisprudence" (72). Daniel Gorman argues that the new "humanitarian imperialism" facilitated through the League, supported by international women's groups and championed by individuals like Leonard Woolf during the interwar years, was "an evolution of, not an alternative to, empire" (216).

The international groups of women activists which had championed the League's work in this area also used the findings of the study to raise concerns about the legal conditions that put all women (and children) at the risk of exploitation and violence, however. During this period, a woman's citizenship status, and therefore civil rights, were dependent on her familial status: her nationality came through her husband or father. In the US and UK, laws regarding citizen status for women were of particular concern in the decade following the war not only because of the increase in fatalities of

men and the influx of immigration and population displacement, but also due to domestic political concerns regarding women's new and shifting rights to vote and to work in *legitimate* professions.¹² The 1927 study shed light on a whole new area of legal vulnerability regarding the legal exclusions of women and minors from civil rights regarding citizenship and employment when national and familial affiliations are ambiguous.¹³ The attention to vulnerability based on citizenship status also highlights other dimensions of race beyond nationality, a complex concern in a global network of colonies and economic trade.

While Harris's summary narrative of the report expresses sympathy for trafficked women of any nationality who find themselves displaced and facing barriers of language or culture in their new surroundings, Philippa Levine has argued that rhetoric around the global trafficking of prostitutes contributed to racialization of the colonial structure. Foreignness, agency, and criminality are flexible concepts that find sedimentation through racialized and gendered considerations of trafficked women. Even in ostensibly objective statistics and official documentation of prostitution and sex trafficking, European women working as prostitutes outside of Europe maintained their whiteness through language in police reports that presumed their *choice* of criminality, an assumption that incorporates a racial-patriarchal worldview and therefore imagines a *downward* mobility in these women's apparent abandonment of their womanhood. On the

12 The Sex Discrimination (Removal) Act was passed in Great Britain in 1919, which removed legal barriers for women to work in civil or judicial positions, for example. It wasn't until after WWII that women's citizenship status would be de-linked from marriage in Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and other colonies (see Iacovetta). In the US, the 1922 Cable (or Married Women's Citizenship) Act allowed women who married *some* "alien" men (only those men of nationalities that qualified for US naturalization) to retain US citizenship, though these rights fluctuated with subsequent legislation throughout the 1930s.

13 Indeed, one of the chapters in H. Wilson Harris's summary of the study published in 1928 is titled "Letting in Light."

other hand, trafficked Asian women, for example, maintained racial otherness in official reports through sympathetic language that projected Orientalist sexism into assumptions of these women's agentless victimhood as well as their *static* role as sex object (137-38). Within this matrix of nationality and agency forged through race and gender and further described in terms of sexuality and criminality, the colonial-patriarchal concept of miscegenation, not directly addressed in the 1927 report, also undoubtedly loomed.¹⁴ In the public rhetoric and official policies regarding Surplus Women and Trafficked Women, racial survival and racial purity were always implied and thus *authorized* the various forms of sexual control of women.¹⁵

My introduction of these two specific economic and political issues regarding women in the transatlantic imaginary during the interwar period will serve as organizing images for this dissertation. "Surplus Women" and "Trafficked Women" are two powerful examples of the various ways that women were manipulated and exploited for social engineering and profiteering purposes during the interwar years. These designations construct *boundaries* for "legitimate" womanhood via race, reproductivity, sexuality, and class. And these figures show up in the modernist literature of women and men of this era to signal social anxieties about gender roles and national identities.¹⁶

14 Urmila Seshagiri's influential article about Jean Rhys's interwar novel *Voyage Through the Dark* examines the "twin crises of filiation and affiliation" which characterize not only the anxiety of Anna Morgan, the white Creole surviving as a "working girl" in London, who is having a baby outside of marriage and imagines that it will be marked as racial other, but also the literary-textual exchanges between modernist experiments and postcolonial contexts that shape her narrative (492).

15 For a broader study of the racialization of gender and sexuality in the European imperial structure from the Victorian period to post-war South African apartheid, see Anne McClintock's watershed study, *Imperial Leather*. For a correlation between post-WWI anxieties about shifting imperial control and increased attention to policing gender and sexuality for British women, see Deborah Cohler's *Citizen, Invert, Queer*, especially p. 158.

16 At a very different narrative and cultural register, Evelyn Waugh's 1928 novel *Decline and Fall* satirically incorporates the White Slave Trade and the Legion's investigations of sex trafficking into its

Surplus and trafficked—or, what I will refer to alternatively as *transient*—women also represent, directly or indirectly, the machinations of empire conducted through women’s intimate relationships. Such machinations serve a colonial-patriarchal global order, and the two historical examples provided here demonstrate fluctuating concerns regarding (re)productivity or sexuality, citizenship or national identity, and mobility. Again, these images and these anxieties mark out the limits—the hopes and fears, the safety and constraints—of white, middle-class womanhood for a transatlantic imaginary.

A gloss of four transatlantic interwar novels by men will further illustrate these organizing images and throw the projects of women writers of the period into relief. In *Women in Love*, a post-WWI novel by D.H. Lawrence which registers his disillusionment with modern society, Ursula and Gudrun represent the “surplus women” type—New Women with more choices for professional and domestic life—who variously threaten and consolidate the sexual, national, and masculine identities of their male counterparts, Rupert and Gerald. For Lawrence and this narrative exploration of transforming transnational and gender identities through modern marriage plots, women’s sexuality has to be sacrificed so that masculine integrity can survive and preserve a purer national/natural order. E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*, begun before the war and revised and published in 1924, takes the predicament of an English Surplus Woman sent to a colonial outpost in India for marriage as the central circumstance of its plot. Two kinds of “surplus” women, Adela Quested, the potential colonial wife, and Mrs. Moore,

plot. This humorous depiction nevertheless comments on the hypocrisies of British social classes and politics.

the widowed mother of a colonial magistrate, provide the means for colonizing and colonized men to explore the inevitable impossibilities of love between themselves.¹⁷

Ernest Hemingway's 1940 novel about the Spanish Civil War, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, includes variations on the "surplus" and the "trafficked" women figures in the context of war in the characters Pilar and Maria. Both women are displaced by the politics and violence of total warfare in Spain during the 1936-1939 conflict and come to represent both stereotypes and the nuances of sexualized, gendered, and racialized roles of women in the fight against fascism and total war, the challenges that, for many in the transatlantic context, *defined* the interwar period. The symbolic and narrative potential of the women—of nonconforming sexuality and intuitive strength on one hand, or the capacity to survive sexual violence and become a love object on the other—helps the American volunteer, Robert Jordan, find spiritual "integration" amid the destructive barbarity of war, a narrative outcome that is more important, in the end, than whether Pilar or Maria will live to see a republican and gender-egalitarian society prevail (which they won't, because Franco's fascist nationalists, supported by Germany and Italy, will win).¹⁸ Their "gypsy" and "brown" qualities further distance their individual fates from the concerns of narrative integrity and heroic integration while naturalizing a sexual and national *difference* that teaches Jordan to both fight and love, or to love to fight.

17 Maryam Kahn has argued that the colonial setting of Forster's novel, including its attention to the relationship between Aziz and Fielding, are merely "the site on which the complex problem of the bourgeois Englishwoman and the terms of her belonging in the national narrative are determined" (219).

18 For more analyses of Pilar and Maria in Hemingway's novel, see Nancy R. Comely and Robert Scholes for a discussion of biographical models in their 1992 study of Hemingway and gender; see Stacey Guill's 2011 article about the Spanish Civil War context of "New Woman" imagery; and see Natalie Carter's 2013 article about the novel's representation of war trauma *via* the characterization of Maria.

Before the Spanish Civil War would transform his own political affiliations, John Dos Passos constructed a *tour de force* of socialist-modernist experimentalism with his *USA* trilogy, a text that is sympathetic to the tragic ironies that women encountered at the beginning of the twentieth century between increasing collective political agency on one hand, and increasing aestheticization and commodification of their individual trauma, on the other. Set against the backdrop of a transformative world war, Dos Passos's clashing narrative modes, some overtly subjective, others ostensibly objective, collude in demonstrating a *functional* and socially *preservative* role for working (white) women of various classes and political agendas whose acts of resistance or complicity will nevertheless birth/midwife the emerging global "superpower" that is the capitalist juggernaut, U.S.A.¹⁹

The scope of this dissertation does not allow for a comparative examination of the above texts with those by the women modernists included in this study. However, the above texts share some telling details with the novels in my discussion—failed marriage plots, the collapsing of homoeroticism with (trans)national desire, the integration of newspaper history and mass media culture into fictional narrative, a tattooed performer who represents the gendered and racialized forms that empire writes onto bodies, to list just a few. These resonances reflect common intersections of modernist experiments with historical crises of volatile national identities, geographic and class mobility, and colonial-patriarchal power shifting. Crucially, these experiments and crises literally and figuratively articulate via *gender*, a category that is itself always in flux. In the above

¹⁹ The most extensive analysis of the various representations and functions of gender, particularly the *feminine*, in Dos Passos's texts remains Janet Galliger Casey's monograph, *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine*.

novels and in the texts examined in this study, consolidations of anxiety through gender control can be framed by the rhetorical and historical examples of Surplus Women and Trafficked Women. These figures contrast *domestic* scenes where the integration and fortification of national and racial identities is secured through white, middle-class womanhood on one hand, with the *transience* and mobility of threatening or transformative sexuality and racial ambiguity on the other.

But rather than a broad exploration of modernist texts of this era, the aim of this dissertation is to undertake a feminist analysis of four interwar narratives that emphasize the limits—the inside and outside—of white, middle-class womanhood. I examine novels by four transatlantic modernists whose diverse national, colonial, sexual, and class identities, as well as their ambivalent affiliations with other modernists and the modernist “canon,” provide a sufficiently varied spectrum from which to outline a particular modernist strain—or capability—that, at the same time, can contribute to recent critical reorientations of modernist studies more generally (more on this below). I argue that interwar novels by Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, Djuna Barnes, and Jean Rhys engage with these “surplus” and “trafficked” images of women during this period, and they particularize and contest them through narratives about women caught in colonial-patriarchal plots. From domestic or transient settings, the fictional women *and* narrative forms discussed in this dissertation nevertheless resist or disrupt, and therefore call attention to, imperialist, nationalistic, militaristic, and otherwise oppressive *coercions* of intimacy that benefit colonial-patriarchal agendas.

What I will define as a *feminist baroque* narrative aesthetic organizes a complex tension of resistance and engagement played out in form and content. My consideration

of these particular texts within this framework adds to our thinking about modernism in terms of aesthetics and gender. This project also offers a feminist engagement with the historical significance of surplus and trafficked women—which shapes a false choice for any woman caught in colonial-patriarchal plots. Importantly, these two figures outline limit cases—in sexuality, reproductivity, and racial affiliation—for the general idea of white womanhood. This study reads these figures as gendered manifestations of crises of social identities and affiliations. The claim that this dissertation makes is that, while the novels described above by modernist men present closed systems—visions of inevitable or total subsumption of women and women’s sexuality *into* history—these feminist baroque narratives remain *open* and ambiguous.²⁰ In this way, they point to an ongoing individual and collective *responsibility* to recognize the narratives and social forms that demand or force certain visions of a future contingent on sexual, racial, and economic exploitation. Ultimately, feminist baroque aesthetics facilitate negotiated, rather than coerced, intimacies.

Inside and Outside: Womanhood, Empire, War

The narratives in this study represent political and aesthetic entanglements with the discourses of colonial-patriarchy and totalitarianism of the interwar period. As Laura Doyle thoroughly documents in her 1994 study on the relationship of “racial patriarchy” to innovations in modern fiction in Western culture, eugenics practices and discourses at the beginning of the twentieth century “helped to inspire a kind of racial panic among the

²⁰ The significance of this open-versus-closed distinction in terms of baroque aesthetics will be elaborated on below.

professional middle classes of Western nations" (14).²¹ Arising from the previous century's anxieties about industrialization, globalization, and scientific and social Darwinism, and compounded by political and economic turmoil in the aftermath of World War One, this increasing "panic" can be seen in the flurry of public debates about what to do with Surplus and Trafficked Women: how to protect them, eliminate them, make use of them. The above examples illustrate a compounding of pressures for white, middle-class women to conform to social patterns, like marriage and reproduction, in order to preserve the race, and to preserve the empire, at the very moment when these ideas are perceived to be most vulnerable to collapse (and "race" and "empire" should be understood as co-constructing). The perceptions of threats to race and empire, in fact, are the grounds for escalated rhetoric and policies during the interwar years directed at condemning or containing gender, sexual, and racial deviance.

The European and North American alignments of economic power and state sovereignty had undergone global shifting in the run-up to and aftermath of the Great War. New empires and old regimes alike maneuvered for internal fortification and external expansion, and revolutionary fervor created new opportunities for national identity and political participation.²² Robin Winks has argued that, between the end of WWI and the start of WWII, political shifting moved "to the extreme right more than . . . to the extreme left" (125).²³ And, among those nations that resisted fascist regime

21 See Doyle's first chapter in *Bordering on the Body: The Racial Matrix of Modern Fiction and Culture* for a thorough discussion of the eugenics discourses of the early twentieth century in relationship to the construction of race, gender, and class in modern Western contexts.

22 See Morrow, *The Great War: An Imperial History*. Also see Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*.

23 Hobsbawm is more ambivalent about this in the European and North American context, but notes that, from a global perspective that includes colonies and Japan, the period decidedly moved right and towards authoritarian and "nationalist-militarist" extremes (111).

change, a paranoid conservatism could be recognized in even the most liberal societies. This was seen, for example, in the renewed isolationism in the United States, which refused to join the League of Nations, passed restrictive immigration laws targeting Catholic and Jewish immigrants from war-ravaged Europe, and experienced a rise in racial violence, including against returning African American war veterans (Winks 187).²⁴

Therefore, while fascism explicitly organized the nationalist and imperialist exertions from Italy, Spain, and Germany beginning in 1919 and culminating in WWII, as a *style of control*, it was not limited to these states. The extremist goal of fascism is a *total binding* of individual to state through various cultural forms, including family structures, the arts, fashion, media, the economy, and so on—and each of these also bound together to remove any ambiguity of identity or space for deviance (hence the term *fascism*, which derives from the symbol of bound sticks that become a weapon or tool).²⁵ Erin Carlston has considered literary entanglements with the sexual forms of fascism in her influential study of three modernist women writing in the interwar period, including Woolf and Barnes—neither of whom lived in or wrote about fascist-controlled nation-states.²⁶ This gendered form of patriotism can be seen in constructions of an “idealization of maternity [that] harnesses women’s (reproductive) service to the State, and suppresses women’s sexuality in favor of their maternal role” (Carlston 7). During the paranoid and volatile interwar period, these fascist demands on the bodies and intimate relationships of

²⁴ These serve as specific examples in the US context, but national and social anxieties channeled into different forms of racism—including, especially, against Catholic and Jewish populations—should be understood as a wider factor and characteristic of the period which also found manifestation in the policing of women’s bodies and relationships.

²⁵ See Kaplan, *Reproductions of Banality*.

²⁶ *Thinking Fascism: Sapphic Modernism and Fascist Modernity*, 1998.

women served to shore up control of fragile and changing societies, whether in Fascist, Nazi, Communist, Nationalist-Republic, or Liberal-Capitalist nation-states. In other words, when sovereignty relies on identification with an ideal or against some universalized concept of internal or external threat, its personal and intimate forms tend to be totalitarian.

The narratives in this study trace the *inside* and *outside* borders of white, middle-class womanhood, constructed through sexual and reproductive demands.²⁷ And these intimate forms of gendered relationships, in turn, establish the success or failure of national and imperial stability. Writing from different perspectives—from elite, married, and landed positions, or from bohemian, queer, and transient precarity—the authors I discuss use feminist baroque narrative strategies to critique and interrupt various bindings of sex and gender roles to national and racial plots. These novels and their protagonists can be thought of as working *against history*, then, in at least two senses of the word “against”: they move *up against*, alongside, touching the forms that would control or subsume them (modernism, colonial-patriarchy, and fascist, material, or national coercions and desire); they also move *against*, in opposition to, resisting affiliations and expectations. If “history” is a dialectic between oppression and revolution, between winners and losers, these narratives expand and retract alongside and contrary to its twisting progress.²⁸

27 Doyle centers the image of “borders” in her argument about racial imaginary pasts and literary form; and her central figure is the mother/maternal. In her theory of modern experimental narrative, maternal-racial borders can signify transgression or recuperation (7-8).

28 Robert Gerwarth uses the term “twisting” to characterize the “pluralism and ambivalence” of historical trajectories during the interwar years, framing his edited volume’s methodological departure from the “normative” approaches which outline an inevitable march towards WWII (2).

In the remainder of this introduction, I will position my dissertation within modernist studies' engagements with women, and then establish the critical and theoretical contexts for the "feminist baroque" as an aesthetic and reading practice that makes visible the demands of colonial-patriarchal coercions of intimacies, tracing the history of the term "Baroque" and its importance for cultural critics at the turn of the twentieth century. I will build on aesthetic and feminist arguments from Mieke Bal and Ewa Ziarek, in particular, to connect baroque and feminist discourses around gendered and racialized subject positionality and the potential of aesthetic transformation. I then conclude with an overview of my dissertation's chapters.

Modernism and Women: Negotiating Relationships

Modernism as a literary field of study was once defined in terms of specific early-twentieth-century Anglo-European authors' rejection of literary tradition, namely realism and other Anglo-European forms established in the nineteenth century.²⁹ "Modernism" was eventually established through canon construction by the Anglo-American academy in English Departments which, at mid-century, heralded the appreciation of autonomous art as a literary methodology via "New Criticism," and modernism became a kind of ideology, the purity test for "high art" in the modern era.³⁰ The Great Divide that early twentieth-century artists might have thought of in terms of "old" versus "new" was re-established as a division between classes, manifesting in cultural consumption

29 As Sean Latham and Gayle Rogers have recently documented, the term "modernism" was unevenly deployed in the first decades of the twentieth century, and it could mean *everything* for its proponents like Ezra Pound or T.S. Eliot, or nothing for others who referred instead to "Post-Impressionism" or "Imagism," or used no word at all to sum up the different aesthetic experiments of the period (1-2).

30 György Lukács argued explicitly that modernism is an ideological form in *The Theory of the Novel*, where he rejected modernism in favor of realism because modernism, he argued, alienated human experience from history.

practices.³¹ As Lisa Rado's introduction to *Rereading Modernism* recounts, by mid-century, modernism was decidedly masculine and focused on a few key writers as *definitive* for the field, including Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, Marcel Proust, and Franz Kafka (3-4). This brief list, a partial reproduction of Lionel Trilling's formative list of modernists according to Rado, should offer a sense of the diversity in styles and Anglo-European identities of modernism and, simultaneously, the lack of diversity in terms of gender and race, as well as a lack of global scope for the field (4).

Then came the feminists. Led by second-wave feminist scholars like Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, and Susan Gubar, women (newly working) in the academy carried out "recovery" projects that re-introduced women and works by women into discussions of modernism and the canon of English literature more generally. As feminist theory has evolved, however, feminist scholars' contributions to, and impact on, the field of modernism has also evolved. While the 1990s saw milestones such as Bonnie Kime Scott's edited anthology *The Gender of Modernism* and Rita Felski's monograph, *The Gender of Modernity*—both of which documented and theorized the centrality of gender identity to literary modernism—the decade also brought forward terms like "sapphic modernism," which pointed the field towards not only the role of sexuality in the lives of women modernists but also in the development of modernism itself.³² With the influence

31 Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane use the term "Great Divide" in the introduction to their influential study on modernism in literature, first published in 1976, to characterize the *historical* split that modernism represented (20). Andreas Huyssen's 1986 study *After the Great Divide*, on the other hand, uses the phrase to refer to the tensions "between high art and mass culture" which, he argued, characterized the real motor of modernism (vii).

32 See the introduction to *Sapphic Modernities*, by Laura Doan and Jane Garrity, for a discussion of the emergence of "sapphic" as a term at the beginning of the twentieth century and in literary criticism about modernism and modernity at the end of the twentieth century. Shari Benstock's groundbreaking 1986

of other developing fields such as critical race studies and postcolonial scholarship, the fields of modernism and feminist studies—especially in North American institutions—saw more shifting at the end of the twentieth century.³³

The new intersections of disciplines and perspectives at the turn of the twenty-first century have been credited with reinvigorating modernist studies as a field, but the field's rapid and continuing "expansion" has also drawn concern, from within as well as from without, about the historical and scholarly integrity of the term "modernism."³⁴ Some influential modernist scholars, especially women working at the intersections of feminist, critical race, and postcolonial studies, have pursued new critical horizons of multiple and localized modernisms.³⁵ Others have argued that the periodization and stylistic parameters of modernism should be narrowly defined to retain an understanding of modernism "as a moment as well as a movement" (James and Seshagiri 88).

Postcolonial theorists like Simon Gikandi have demonstrated how historical specificity as well as critical diversity can contribute to the new directions of modernist studies by exploring the cultural exchanges between European-defined modernity and decolonial efforts to re-write modernism ("Preface: Modernism in the World" 421). Other scholars,

study, *Women of the Left Bank*, should be considered as a key milestone in reconsidering not only women but women's sexuality as driving forces in the production and celebration of modernism.

³³ To borrow Virginia Woolf's famous formula and to repeat the declaration of Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz in their 2008 article in *PMLA*, "New Modernist Studies" was born on or about 1998 when the Modernist Studies Association (MSA) was founded to recognize and support the "reshapings" of the field through new interdisciplinary and international approaches ("About"). Mao and Walkowitz put the date at 1999 ("The New Modernist Studies" 737), while the MSA website uses 1998.

³⁴ Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz offered "expansion" as the "single word" which could describe the "transformations in literary modernist scholarship" at the turn of the twenty-first century ("New Modernist Studies" 737). It should also be noted, however, that "modernism" has always been a contested term.

³⁵ See, for example, *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity*, co-edited by Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel and published in 2005; *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism*, published by Jessica Berman in 2011; and *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time*, published in 2015 by Susan Stanford Friedman.

like Heather Love, are refiguring the field by looking again—or “backwards”—to reconsider hidden or lost histories of “queer modernity” alongside the normative versions of modernism.³⁶

As we arrive at the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, the field is voicing another critical turn. In a special issue of *Modernism/modernity* at the end of 2018, Paul Saint-Amour declared “Weak Theory” as the disciplinary shift the field has been undergoing since the turn of the twenty-first century. Saint-Amour defines weak theory in terms of a critical paradigm shift to re-see history and subjectivity without totalizing or “teleological models” (443), taking theoretical models from Bruno Latour and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, for example, to describe more “associative” and “reparative” critical methods.³⁷ It cannot be disputed that the capacious, rather than restrictive, sense of the term “modernism” has resulted in not only revisions but proliferation of syllabi, anthologies, studies of modernism, as well as new conferences.³⁸ And, if we follow Sedgwick’s argument that reparative and paranoid affects—and therefore our critical methodologies—are often (and should be) *combined*, rather than one over-writing the other, then we can understand modernist studies’ “weak theory turn” to include those projects with strong claims—such as those which align with feminist politics or Marxist critiques—as well as those which rely on descriptive or “vacillating”

³⁶ Love’s 2007 study, *Feeling Backwards*, doesn’t include the term “modernism” in its title though it explicitly focuses on queer modernity; Mao and Walkowitz’s 2006 collection *Bad Modernisms* can also be considered in this category of reconsidering different valuations of early-twentieth-century literary texts under a more capacious use of the label “modernism.”

³⁷ Bruno Latour has advocated for definitional and methodological transformation in the social sciences, and in doing so has been theorizing major shifts in the dominant paradigm of critical analysis; see *Reassembling the Social*. Sedgwick wrote about the need for literary and cultural studies to use “reparative” as well as “paranoid” critical practices, drawing on her work in affect studies; see *Touching Feeling*.

³⁸ A telling example of these revisioning effects on scholarly production is the 2007 publication of a new anthology edited by Scott to update the 1990 landmark: *Gender in Modernism: New Geographies; Complex Intersections*.

approaches (Dimock 737-38).³⁹ It is the non-hierarchical combination of approaches, moreover, that constitutes a “weak turn,” rather than a disciplinary adherence to a single, rigid method.

My project is the continuation of feminist considerations of modernist texts by women, and in doing so contributes to *reconsiderations* of modernism itself. This dissertation attends to narrative form as well as the political imaginary of gender and race in order to consider how women’s experimental writing participates in constructing or resisting national or colonial imagination.⁴⁰ My project also draws inspiration and methodological models from postcolonial modernists like Gikandi and Mary Lou Emery, however, whose consideration of texts’ colonial “inflections” offers different perspectives of modernism while attending to “the contradictory violence and creativity of global exchange” (Emery “Caribbean Modernism” 59). My project thus contributes to feminist revisionings of modernism as it also takes up postcolonial and queer studies approaches for *un-mapping* stories of modernism and women’s lives. By isolating the Surplus/Trafficked Women borders of white, middle-class womanhood in the transatlantic interwar imagination of modernist women, and by tracing engagements between their narrative experimentalism and the cultural interests in the Baroque during this crisis period, I identify feminist baroque aesthetics that do not settle identities but rather facilitate engagement with the negotiations.

39 Rather than the replacement of strong methods with weak methods, Sedgwick is “interested in doing justice to the powerful reparative practices that . . . infuse self-avowedly paranoid critical projects, as well as in the paranoid exigencies that are often necessary for nonparanoid knowing and utterance” (*Touching Feeling* 128-29).

40 For example, my project could be considered an extension of projects such as Jane Garrity’s *Step-Daughters of England*, which looked at experimental narratives by British women during the interwar period to consider how something like national identity—at a time of social and political crisis—is mapped *through women*.

Weak Modernism and Feminist Baroque

Therefore, the baroque framework works on a few levels in this study. It provides an aesthetic discourse to describe the forms at work in the four narratives I re-read, offering a specific cultural context for, and a set of aesthetic principles to describe, the *expansion and retraction* dynamics of these texts. But the framework also serves a methodological re-orientation towards modernism itself. As a term, the “baroque” can stand in as its own metaphor for the perspectival shifts this re-orientation allows. Baroque aesthetics, after all, render a “dynamic perspective,” as Eugenio d’Ors explained in 1935, capable of a “multiplicity of simultaneous intentions” and representing “inner mental fragmentation expressed by opposing forms” (88). And while the terms multiplicity, simultaneity, and fragmentation reveal an affinity between baroque and modernist aesthetics, a baroque *framework* or paradigm is, in many ways, antithetical to modernism: it announces a backwards-looking perspective rather than a forward-looking one; it announces organic chaos as opposed to artificial order; and it announces open, ambiguous potentiality rather than the clarity of inevitability. In bringing these texts together under the framework of feminist baroque, the borders of modernism expand and retract to allow for additional perspectives of modernism’s pasts, as well as ongoing aesthetic and political potential to define modernism’s futures.

These interwar stories and their narrative forms, however, rely on a kind of *weakness* to resolve their dual aesthetic-historical projects, which is one reason I emphasize the “weak theory” turn in modernist studies. The women protagonists in the novels I include in this study respectively: succumb to the duties of war and domestic order as one and the same (*Between the Acts*); escape the domesticizing forms of

colonial-patriarchy as well as the modernist narrative itself by simply disappearing from the text (*The Last September*); literally bow down (*Nightwood*); or embrace sexual and social humiliation (*Good Morning, Midnight*). The “failures” of these women are echoed in the novels’ ambiguous, even unsatisfying resolutions, and in the difficult reading experiences that many critics and literature students report: these texts are, in some ways, narrative failures. I suggest that the feminist baroque aesthetic itself is a “weak aesthetic,” refuting forms of *control*, ceding narrative integrity or closure to ambivalence and ambiguity. This particular “weakness” has aesthetic and political purpose: facilitating engagement with, and recognition of, negotiations of control through intimate relationships. And while positioning feminist aesthetics in terms of *weakness* might seem counter-productive, or at least ignorant of the important work in feminist scholarship to disentangle feminist critique from discourses of essential femininity that might reify patriarchal language and hierarchies, I do so purposefully and carefully. Even (perhaps *especially*) at a current political moment in US history when the language and practices of racist misogyny dominate popular rhetoric and define the policies of the current administration, *moving towards* a stance of weakness and *away from* militancy or fascism represents important resistance and reclamation work.

“A huge apocalyptic wind”: Baroque and Twentieth Century Culture

“Baroque” as a cultural term arose as a derogatory and retrospective label to distinguish classical and nonclassical forms of the late-sixteenth to early-eighteenth centuries. Emerging later in the eighteenth century during a critical and cultural shift towards neoclassicism, the term was leveraged “against what [neoclassicists] thought of as the undisciplined and capricious expression of the previous century that departed from

strict classicist norms” (Kaup 3-4). It is at the turn of the nineteenth century into the twentieth that critical attention to the Baroque shifts—and grows. This was facilitated, in great part, by the work of the Swiss-German art historian Heinrich Wölfflin. In 1888 he published *Renaissance und Barock*, which established the Baroque as a period (roughly 1550-1750) in the development of European art that reflected particular aesthetic attitudes and techniques rather than simply a term for any “decadent and degenerate art” that was often associated with “the decay of Renaissance principles” (Lambert 33). Wölfflin’s monumental *Principles of Art History* (1915) later established specific characteristics of the baroque as a style—with five principles—which he defined in binary opposition to classical style.⁴¹ The re-introduction of the “baroque” in the twentieth-century therefore retained its anti-classicist designation but now had a set of aesthetic criteria that (ostensibly) removed an absolute value judgement.

Before describing this resurgence and redefinition of baroque aesthetics at the beginning of the twentieth century, it will help to understand the historical context of Baroque as a seventeenth-century artistic period.⁴² As a period term in art history, the

⁴¹ These principles will be discussed below in terms of the baroque “fold,” but Wölfflin’s taxonomy can be summarized as follows, with the second descriptor in each binary being the baroque characteristic: 1) *Linear vs. painterly*: Baroque style presents gradations, relativity, and interpenetration of colors and lines rather than delineated space with fixed boundaries. 2) *Plane vs. recession*: Baroque style offers a spectator a relational order of images, not only offering depth and hierarchy within the image, but implicating the spectator’s positionality in relation to the image. 3) *Closed vs. open*: Baroque style reaches (or suggests) beyond the frame/artwork. 4) *Multiplicity vs. unity*: A bit counter-intuitive terminology, but Wölfflin means here that classical forms achieve unity through independent parts that share a pattern (coordination), while baroque forms defy internal coordination or atomization and instead signify as whole (therefore representative of systems; any one part of a baroque composition is recognized as *fragmentary*). 5) *Absolute clarity vs. relative clarity of the subject*: Baroque forms present information through indirect, even evasive, strategies (including all of the above techniques).

⁴² In this study, I will alternate between “baroque” and “Baroque” to differentiate between the transhistorical style and the historical period.

Baroque is associated with Counter-Reformation in European history.⁴³ This was a period initiated by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), convened by the Catholic Church in Rome to address the growing influence of Protestant Reformation across Europe. The Baroque is often considered an aesthetic arm of—or sometimes resistance to—the aggressive dissemination of the ideology of the Catholic Church across European and colonial territories in response to “Protestant insurgency” (Zamora and Kaup 3). The Counter-Reformation period, which lasted until the end of the seventeenth century, included the Inquisition, persecutions and deportations of non-Catholics in Catholic-ruled nations, and attempts to re-convert and regain control of Protestant-reformed nations like England.

In a striking parallel to the social function of women during the interwar crises of colonial-patriarchal power shifts introduced above, women, especially Catholic nuns, were targets of, and instruments for, ideological and global control during the Counter-Reformation. Both in Europe and its colonies across the globe, “the control of women [was] integral to the Vatican’s campaign of advancing its moral and territorial ambitions after the losses” due to Protestant Reformation (O’Brien 390). This took the form of new restrictions of women and nuns in Catholic institutions in Europe, where “preachers and confessors became increasingly preoccupied with containing women,” as well as increased incorporation of colonized women into evangelical roles in colonies in order to expand Rome’s corporeal and spiritual presence across the globe (O’Brien 390-91). As a

⁴³ This singular historical association is not universally accepted among historians or cultural critiques, but it is an influential and convenient historical anchor for the Baroque as a period. See José Antonio Maravall’s 1975 study, *Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of a Historical Structure*, for a different historical approach to the Baroque. While he limits the Baroque “epoch” to the seventeenth century, he locates its epicenter in Spain and connects it to a complex and “profound social crisis” period involving not only religious but also economic factors (19).

style associated with this theological-political period, the Baroque was characterized by the artistic and architectural commissions from the Church—in both Europe and colonial territories—to represent its own power through dramatic depictions of an *intimate and demanding relationship* between God and his subjects.⁴⁴ Even though art historians would eventually include Protestant-associated nations and artists within the Baroque period, the predominant association of Baroque art with the Catholic Church and its extravagant opulence, on one hand, or its aggressive sensuality, on the other, meant that Protestant- and Enlightenment-dominated institutions and states, which promoted austerity and rationality, would devalue and reject Baroque forms on epistemological and ideological grounds. As the eighteenth century saw the triumph of the rational age of Enlightenment in politics, philosophy, and sciences, and the Neoclassical turn in the arts, the Baroque rapidly went out of favor among Western, non-Catholic territories.

In what would become influential re-framing of Baroque aesthetics for neobaroque artists and theorists of the second half of the twentieth-century, especially among Francophone and Hispanophone theorists, Eugenio D’Ors referred to this historical context in his interwar lectures in Paris as an ideological clash between the classicism of ascetics and the pantheism of vitalists that, though finding vibrant expression during the Counter-Reformation period, could be seen across all ages, including “primitive,” classical, and modern ages, as a cultural contest between the shifting prioritizations of “Eternity” or “Life” (92, 84).⁴⁵ The Catalan art historian,

44 As Lois Parkinson Zamora and Monika Kaup argue, however, “one of the few satisfying ironies of European imperial domination worldwide [is] that the Baroque worked poorly as a colonizing instrument. Its visual and verbal forms are . . . dynamic, porous, and permeable; thus, . . . the Baroque was itself eventually colonized” by non-Catholic, and non-European artists, architects, and philosophers (3).

45 D’Ors’s language about the Baroque of so-called “primitive” cultures is particularly racist and reflects his own colonial perspective, as he refers to the Baroque characteristics seen in the “fetishes of savages”

influenced not only by Wölfflin's classification of Baroque aesthetics during WWI but also by Oswald Spengler's post-WWI cultural theories about the cyclical nature of civilizations and cultures, was one of the interwar cultural critics who saw links between the Baroque period and the current modern, war-torn, and culturally re-positioning age. From Friedrich Nietzsche at the end of the nineteenth century to Walter Benjamin in the 1920s and including D'Ors in the 1930s, cultural theorists of the modern era explicitly or implicitly defined both the Baroque and the cultural forms of their own historical crisis contexts in terms of clashing ideologies grappling for control.⁴⁶ D'Ors saw baroque aesthetics as manifestation of "A huge apocalyptic wind" and the result of artists' "impatient modernity" (81). No wonder interwar cultural critics in Europe became fascinated with the turbulent aesthetics of the Baroque.

Wölfflin's 1915 publication of a taxonomy for Baroque and Classical styles in art could be considered the watershed moment for how the twentieth century would come to understand the Baroque in transhistorical terms (not only a period but also a *style*). But as early as 1879 Friedrich Nietzsche had defined the Baroque as a "timeless phenomenon that periodically recurs" to mark the end of an age, thus aligning baroque forms not only with autonomous artistic decadence but also with cycling cultural chaos and decline (qtd. in Newman 24). As Jane Newman has recently documented, German cultural critics were particularly concerned with the task of defining their own and others' cultural products in

and the "elemental symbols" on recent display in Paris (92). He also suggests that this version of Baroque aesthetics "was being *reborn* in an *immediate yesterday*" (92, added emphasis), referring to a Eurocentric sense of history and culture in a global context, where non-European cultures are considered outside of, or prior to, their own historical progress. Whether this reference is to the International Exhibition in Paris in 1937 or to an earlier exhibition is unclear, as the essay, though first published in French in 1935, was updated and re-printed in Spanish 1944.

⁴⁶ See Spengler's *Decline of the West*, a multi-volume work published 1926-1928.

terms of a newly animated opposition between classical and baroque forms (24-25).

Among these critics was Walter Benjamin, whose doctoral thesis in 1925 described German drama of the Baroque period in terms of a counter-classical aesthetic that was the product of an era of political and spiritual crisis.⁴⁷ Following the dichotomy that Nietzsche and Wölfflin had established between baroque and classical forms, Benjamin described baroque's capability to represent death and decay in such a way that anchors an historical (rather than universal or eternal) perspective, thus helping to facilitate recognition of the "biographical historicity" of the spectator (166).

Attention to the Baroque in the decades following the Great War was not limited to German cultural circles, however. In the 1924 catalogue for a London club's exhibition of Baroque art in English collections, Osbert Sitwell writes: "The Baroque epoch was, in truth, an age of experiment, and for that reason alone, the present generation should find in those new stirrings much of interest and sympathy" (qtd. in Calloway 13). Sitwell's commentary suggests a recognized affinity between early twentieth-century modernism and seventeenth-century Baroque experiments with form. And though his own opinion differed about its transhistorical links, René Wellek described the proliferation of interest

⁴⁷ Newman argues that cultural theories of the Baroque at the turn of the twentieth century served to define national origin stories and delineate national progress narratives of modernity, and that this Baroque-Renaissance opposition had wide-ranging repercussions across the twentieth century. For example, she writes: "While it is certainly worth asking whether it was not some version of precisely this kind of supersessionary Renaissance that became the banner under which both the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European nation-states and the Cold War United States marched when they endorsed the study of the Renaissance with such enthusiasm, such moves did not stop there. Indeed, it bears observing that many subnational world-cultural traditions— such as the Harlem and the Maori Renaissances, as well as the continent-spanning "African" Renaissance— may also have used the idea of cultural "rebirth" as a way of finding a seat at the table of 'modernity'" (3-8).

in Baroque aesthetics during the interwar period as resulting, in part, from a perceived recurrence of baroque forms in modern aesthetics.⁴⁸

Jane Newman's recent study of the significance of Baroque aesthetics to critics in Walter Benjamin's cultural milieu outlines a contentious and politically motivated set of diverging attitudes regarding the valuation and categorization of the baroque that escalated during the interwar period. According to Newman, the context that led to monumental works on Baroque such as Wölfflin's and Benjamin's included a "reeling network of arguments that used the Renaissance-Baroque dyad to pose questions about period and style, modernity and progress, and . . . cultural identity" (28). A poignant repercussion of this kind of retrospective cultural mapping that links evaluation of art to national and historical identity was the role of art criticism and curation in the fascist regimes of Mussolini and Hitler in the lead up to the Second World War. In 1937, for example, Hitler infamously delineated between a "degenerate" movement and a classical movement in German art—no doubt drawing on the cultural debates about baroque and classicism in German critical circles. He assigned to the former category either treasonous intentions or biologically-inferior explanations.⁴⁹ Crucially, these "degenerate" and "classical" artworks (and artists) were coterminous: Hitler's racist cultural vision demonstrates how the *present* can be divided into a future and a past, not only through curation of cultural objects but through systematic genocide.

48 Wellek was a literary comparatist who escaped the Nazi takeover of Europe in 1939 and immigrated to the United States. His comprehensive essay on the literary Baroque was first published in French in 1935 and later translated into Spanish in 1944. His essay traces the spread of Baroque as a critical category from German cultural circles at the turn of the twentieth century to other cultural considerations in other European regions in later decades of the interwar period. See Zamora and Kaup, pp. 93-94, and his essay, "The Concept of Baroque in Literary Scholarship."

49 Hitler's regime organized a national exhibit of "Degenerate Art" in 1937 in order to contrast unwelcome art—such as that made by Jewish or other disqualified social groups, as well as abstract and expressive modernism—with ideal classicist German art.

With these contexts in mind, I suggest that our modern understanding of what “baroque” art and literature constitutes is fundamentally entwined with cultural debates and political agendas of the beginning of the twentieth century—that, furthermore, we can consider baroque aesthetics as a critical construction sedimented by twentieth-century culture. This early twentieth-century historiography of the baroque is crucial to understanding the development and circulation of neobaroque discourses throughout the twentieth century and beyond. On one hand, it helps to explain the surge of interest in the B/baroque after World War One (see Figure 2). On another hand, it illuminates the persistent problems within neobaroque discourses involving the relationship of seventeenth-century philosophy and aesthetics to twentieth-century cultural theory. Questions of transhistoricity, political implications of the representations of subjectivity, and the emphasis on an antagonistic relationship between the “baroque” and “Enlightenment modernity” can be re-mapped through the historical and cultural era we generally associate with “Modernism” and contextualized with the racist, nationalist, and imperialist ideological visions of that age—including both paranoia and hope for revolution or recuperation. This convergence of aesthetics and politics underscores my analysis, which does not suggest that these modernist women writers were consciously part of an aesthetic movement that would have been recognized as “feminist baroque,” but rather that a shift in critical perspective that takes into account the discourses and political orientations that “feminist baroque” affords will allow for re-seeing these texts as bound up in the aesthetic-political events of the era.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ The modernist experiments of men such as James Joyce, Franz Kafka, and Jorge Luis Borges have also been considered in terms of baroque aesthetics, and their baroque characteristics should also be considered in terms of this twentieth-century reappraisal of the Baroque. In the case of Borges, there is certainly evidence of direct and conscious influence from Baroque forms and philosophy. The current study focuses



Figure 2: Google Books Ngram: “Baroque” 1800-2000. This graph displays the occurrence of the word “Baroque” in the digitized corpora of English texts published between the years 1800 and 2000. We can see that the occurrences increase steeply after 1920 and peak before 1960.

The turn-of-the-twentieth-century insistence on a classical/baroque opposition as the ultimate cultural binary that could organize the epistemologies, ontologies, and aesthetics (and therefore define the borders) of *modernity* paved the way for the appropriations of Baroque aesthetics as generative for “counter,” “anti-,” and “post-” creativity in the latter half of the century. There is some irony in this, of course, when we remember the role Baroque art played in the aggressive agenda of the Catholic Church to disseminate their ideology across the globe in the seventeenth century. In an important sense, the colonizing role of seventeenth century Baroque both inside and outside of Europe has parallels with the coercive role of aesthetics for fascist regimes. But the re-culturation of the baroque in the twentieth century, especially during the interwar period, realigned it with anti-fascist and anti-normative ideologies, as evident in the Nazi Party’s dueling exhibitions of “Degenerate” and “Classical” art at the end of the 1930s.⁵¹

on exploring the feminist aesthetics of transatlantic women modernists, but this re-framing of modernism alongside historical interest in Baroque forms suggests additional areas for re-considering modernist and experimental forms by others.

⁵¹ See Frederic Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics*, especially pp. 151-68. Another irony, however, is that postmodern and poststructural theorists looked to the Baroque as an example of aesthetic and

A prime example of this transformed cultural legacy comes from Cuban writers José Lezama Lima and Alejo Carpentier who fashioned a counter-conquest and anti-colonial *neobaroque* for postcolonial discourses emerging from Caribbean and Latin American cultures, where Spanish (and Catholic) colonization brought European forms (of politics and aesthetics) to transform land and peoples.⁵² For these postcolonial theorists, the historical Baroque period coincides with the apex of conquest and colonization in the “New World,” and they demonstrate that these majoritarian strategies (to expand and assimilate or erase) can be minoritized through appropriation and perspective shifts. Another legacy of baroque’s reculturation are European-centered theorists such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, and Gilles Deleuze, who reference baroque forms and philosophies as counter-Enlightenment aesthetics. These latter theorists are primarily concerned with the development of Western epistemology and aesthetics that might be better understood and criticized by engaging with the “repressed” and “latent” forms associated with the baroque. Taking their cues from psychoanalysis rather than colonization, these latter theorists consider the “baroque” as both the hidden underside of modernity and a critical perspective of modernity.

My project benefits from both the early twentieth-century reconsideration of the Baroque and the later twentieth-century development of “neobaroque” philosophies and aesthetics. But the latter developments add important critical framing of history that has

epistemological dissolution of the binary. However, this assumption of generic forms relies on a binary between classicism and baroque—that is why I suggest that this history and this aesthetic dynamic is the ultimate binary of what we think of as modernity, which should remind us that the concept of modernity itself relies on binarist thinking, a contention that many postcolonial theorists pose.

⁵² Zamora and Kaup refer to this form of transformation of baroque in the “New World”—an appropriation by the colonized and former colonized—as “transculturation.” It should be noted that, though this “re-conquest” via postcolonial baroque forms was only *theorized* as such beginning in the interwar period, appropriation, indigenization, and counter-colonization of baroque forms in colonial spaces was simultaneous with colonization throughout the colonial period.

been influential for this study. Both Eurocentric and postcolonial neobaroque discourses reject European Enlightenment-organized “progress” narratives and conceptualizations of *history* as total, linear, and inevitable; they also often reject epistemological and aesthetic models coded through a classical tradition. These revisionings of narratives *about* history and aesthetics is some of the “counter” work that a baroque perspective can offer.

However, the *feminist* perspective in this study provides additional parameters for the “counter” work that the baroque does. It is not any or all configurations that might be described as “baroque” that I include in this study; rather, it is the gendered and sexualized constitution of social control through coerced intimate forms, and the various representations of and resistance to these forms, which are examined. This includes experimental narrative forms that recreate the expansions and retractions of racial-patriarchal and imperial power. For example, these texts’ proliferating narrator perspectives, uses of *mise en abyme* effects, or elliptical and fragmented narrative forms can be described as baroque. Importantly, these interwar texts recuperate not only baroque forms but the power of the implicated spectator who, as witness and participant, recognizes not only the violent and coercive forms that patriarchal nationalist or imperialist imagination inscribes onto women and other devalued bodies, but also the responsibility to disrupt those forms. The feminist baroque engages with the coercive forms of domination while also resisting expectations of authoritarian intimacy.

Feminist Aesthetics and Baroque Spectatorship

On one hand baroque aesthetics in the twentieth century are already theorized for political ends—for anti-normative, anti-colonial, and anti-fascist purposes, even if these labels aren’t explicitly used—but on the other hand, especially in literary studies, its

function and affinity for *feminist* theory and practice has not been clearly defined outside of Mieke Bal's essay "Enfolding Feminism."⁵³ In that essay, Bal draws on the aesthetics of the baroque "fold" to describe a reorganization of subject-object orientations that can redistribute our sedimented and disjunctive (or classical) constructions of epistemology and ontology; and this would allow for a "new feminist position" for the new millennium (the article first appeared in 2001). For Bal, and for this study, the baroque fold—represented in deep shadows next to lush fabrics in a painting, or smooth, disappearing space within the recreation of folds in a sculpture, or in gaps produced by non-linear, elliptical, or open-ended narrative forms—is useful as a metaphor, representing possible connections rather than breaks, and the promise of existence even in obscurity.

The baroque fold demonstrates all of the five principles of baroque aesthetics as laid out by Wölfflin in 1915: it is *painterly* rather than linear, meaning that it emphasizes relativity and interpenetration rather than absolute boundary. It is a *recession* rather than a visual plane, meaning that the spectator can encounter imaginative space rather than a fixed limit. Similarly, the fold is *open* rather than closed, indicating possibilities beyond the represented object or artwork. It signifies a *unity* or wholeness through continuance and connection, as opposed to disjunction. And, finally, it conveys *relative clarity* rather than absolute clarity because it is an indirect and evasive representation—through space, movement, and darkness. Bal argues that the fold "remains a rather banal, material figure[;] it de-romanticizes the idea of relationship itself" (212). Yet the fold also "lures and seduces" the gaze, promising "inner secrets[;] we want to know (epistemically driven) what is in it. But there is nothing, so there is no ontological trap that can captivate

⁵³ Jessica Berman draws on Bal's use of baroque aesthetics for feminist theory in her own analysis of Virginia Woolf's aesthetics, and I refer to this in my chapter on Woolf's novel.

us” (212). Thus Bal, through the baroque fold, attempts to disturb the “hold” that divisions between epistemology and ontology have “over feminism as a theoretical practice” (212). She draws on the fold as “an emblem of baroque philosophy and visual art” in order “to propose the fold not only as a model for argumentation, but as an argument in and of itself” (213). Engaging with the fold *as* a fold might shift engagements with feminism.

In this way, feminism can be reactivated as both a point of view and a relationship that recognizes an *intersubjectivity* that undermines an epistemological-ontological split which, according to Bal, has hindered feminist theory and practice (219).⁵⁴ Mieke Bal is a neobaroque theorist whose influences align with twentieth-century continental philosophy, especially psychoanalysis and poststructuralism. Looking backwards to the seventeenth century from the end of the twentieth-century for aesthetic inspiration, Bal argues that the *fold*, as a way of seeing, enables a reorganization of not only subject and object, but of space and time as well. This transforms the limits of representation, which traditionally construct fixed subject-object orientations; instead, a baroque perspective sees “events” rather than fixed things, events that are always “becoming.”

We can understand “event” here as related to what Walter Benjamin meant when he wrote about the recognition of the “state of emergency” in his “Theses on the

⁵⁴ The concept of “intersubjectivity” in twentieth-century philosophy is often associated with the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which later influenced Jean-Luc Nancy, and can be glossed as the interdependency of subjects and subjectivity based on social and physical contingency/connectedness. However, a more relevant philosophical basis for a feminist definition and implication should be traced to Simone De Beauvoir. De Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty, along with Jean Paul Sartre, developed their theories of ethics and phenomenology in the 1930s and 1940s context of fascism and World War Two. De Beauvoir developed a philosophy distinct from her peers that critiqued the abstract/universalizing theories of Kant, Descartes, and Husserl, for example, and emphasized a *situated* embodiment that determines social and economic relatedness and responsibility. See her essay, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Also see Merleau-Ponty’s *The Phenomenology of Perception* and Jean-Luc Nancy’s *Being Singular Plural*.

Philosophy of History” while fleeing Nazi persecution in 1940. In that posthumously published treatise, Benjamin argues: “The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the ‘state of emergency’ in which we live is not the exception but the rule,” and understanding this adjusted concept of history “will improve our position in the struggle against Fascism” (*Illuminations* 257). What is key for Benjamin’s argument, and an implication of Bal’s feminist theory of baroque aesthetics, is that the act of *recognition* is what can *become an event*. Recognition is what enables a shift in agency and potential, when *objects might become actors*. For Benjamin’s context, the liberatory and revolutionary potential of this perspective shift enables a release from the ideological effects of state policies and practices of oppression which evacuate time or create stasis.⁵⁵

In Bal’s configuration of an aesthetic event as always “becoming,” ontological essentialism is necessarily dissolved while, at the same time, the divide between the process of interpretation-codification (epistemology) and the objects of this process (ontology) is also dissolved. This is because a *baroque* aesthetic configuration or experience draws attention to the *witnessing* of the event, the point of view, as participatory in any ontological-epistemological *becoming*. Importantly, Bal suggests that the fold, as a metaphor, provides “a concept for articulating a position beyond the inextricable knot of representation” (231). For me, this is possible precisely because of the *witnessing-becoming* baroque addition to (or reconfiguration of) the classical *subject-object* limitations of representation. In simplified terms, the baroque point of view of this argument (or any argument) about disciplinary or conceptual impasses adds a *third thing*

⁵⁵ These ideas are further developed in Alain Badiou’s arguments about event and revolution (*Being and Event*). See also an affinity with Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network theory which considers non-humans as actors.

to the subject-object binary: the spectator. This automatically undoes the fixity of all terms. Does the spectator transform the subject into an object? Can the object affect the subject or the spectator, and therefore become a subject? Does the spectator also shift between subject and object? *When* does the spectator decide which of the terms is subject and object? The limitations of representation are re-seen as contingent and variable and, crucially: negotiable.

Recent work from Ewa Plonowska Ziarek has provided a new direction for approaching and defining “feminist aesthetics” that neither posits an essentialist ontology for *feminine* art, nor is confined to feminist critique of traditionalist philosophical aesthetics. Ziarek’s contribution is especially relevant to this study because it arises from modernist studies. She links revolutionary activism at the beginning of the twentieth century with the revolution of forms associated with transatlantic modernisms. She argues that a convergence of “revolution” and “melancholy” in modernist tropes produces a “feminine aesthetics of potentiality” in the writing of modernist women (3). Or, rather, Ziarek suggests that the “entrenched opposition” or critically-produced paradox “between revolt and melancholia” that characterizes not only women’s literary practice but also the politics of modernism provides an opportunity for seeing the relationship between the two—revolution and melancholy—in new ways. In Ziarek’s reconsideration of Theodor Adorno’s aesthetic theories of politics and modernism, which identify art as both contingent with history and radically oriented, she argues that “women’s modern literature” is always already situated “*between* economic exchange and utopian political praxis, *between* political domination and the possibility of freedom” (12, original emphasis).

In this study, that *historical gap* in which Ziarek identifies the potential of feminist aesthetics is explored in the sense of a feminist baroque narrative engagement with the revolution-oppression dialectic of history: again, feminist baroque texts move *against history*, touching and resisting, expanding its limits and retracting from its demands. The simultaneous impossibility of a feminist aesthetics (as Rita Felski has suggested) and the persistence of gendered and racialized bodies, radical art, and revolutionary potentiality, suggests that feminist aesthetics can be considered as “haunting” history (Ziarek 5), and as *interrupting* historical time (Ziarek 93).⁵⁶ Feminist aesthetics haunts both critical discourses and actualized politics, in other words, because it is already included as exclusion. To bring these concepts together: we might say that feminist baroque aesthetics haunts the folds of history, creating dimensions of possibility that are nevertheless always connected to the restrictions of gendered (including the complex dimensions and dynamics of this) dominance.

This haunting dynamic of feminist aesthetics can be considered in terms of a feminist intimacy, an intimacy that is created in textual form and *negotiated* through engaging with the texts. The pathbreaking modernist Dorothy Richardson used the phrase “creative collaboration” in multiple instances to describe the *active* experience she imagined for readers of modernist fiction.⁵⁷ Her new novel form was associated with the experiences of New Women in a cosmopolitan turn-of-the-twentieth-century context in which her protagonist is a white and middle-class woman whose sudden financial

⁵⁶ In *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*, Felski writes: “my dissatisfaction with feminist aesthetics does not stem from a belief that there are no connections between art and gender politics. Rather, I do not think that feminist aesthetics helps us understand these connections adequately” (qtd. in Ziarek 11).

⁵⁷ See *Authors To- Day and Yesterday*, edited by Stanley Kunitz (New York: Wilson, 1933), p.562.

instability due to her father's death requires that she work for a living. Therefore, this protagonist encounters new kinds of (dangerous or exciting) intimate relationships—among fellow townhouse boarders, employers, men and women she is not related to, strangers on trains or in cafés, and so on. Her “revolutionary” subject matter was delivered in a revolutionary form that compelled and confronted her reader. Richardson's pathbreaking narrative experiments ushered in literary modernism for the English novel, as we have defined it, and it is significant that her aesthetic endeavors were consciously grounded in a theory of *engagement* that not only facilitated reader participation but emphasized the (feminist) notion of “collaboration”: a particular kind of intimacy that relies on reciprocity and negotiation.

This goal of feminist collaboration is the political relationship that feminist baroque forms might encourage. Jacques Rancière's twenty-first century argument in *The Emancipated Spectator* thus reminds us of something that Richardson already offered through literary experiments: that it is not just the forms, but the engagement with forms that does political work.⁵⁸ In my first chapter, I argue that Woolf also understood this, and that she critiques assumptions about the power of avant-garde aesthetic techniques through the failed theatrical stunts of Miss La Trobe; at the same time, La Trobe's theatrical event, and the narrative form that shapes it for Woolf's readers, performs as an *opportunity* for political engagement. Therefore, I propose that a feminist theory of aesthetics involves *haunting* not only within but in relation to artworks, i.e. the haunting

⁵⁸ Tina Chanter has argued that Rancière's philosophy reproduces “the invisibility of women and slavery in [his] analysis of Greek texts as foundational for Western democracy” (21), and thus his analyses of the politics of aesthetics requires critical intervention and supplementation; in this spirit, I couch Rancière's theory of the “emancipated spectator” as subordinated to Dorothy Richardson's earlier aesthetic theory and endeavor for “collaboration,” which arguably arose from her recognition of the inequality of experience, aesthetic and political.

also carried out by the (feminist) spectator or critic, who is invested with the potential to *recognize* the patterns of oppression—or a revolutionary potential.⁵⁹

This is why an understanding of baroque aesthetics assists with the construction of a theory of feminist aesthetics. Baroque aesthetics already factor in the *embodied* positionality of the spectator as a crucial element of the aesthetic construction (as opposed to an ideal or classical spectator). This “positionality” in the early modern development of the baroque referred most often to the spatial (rather than socio-political) position of a spectator, such as a spectator’s literal point of view of an artwork. The playful implications of this can be seen in Baroque *trompe l’oeil* paintings and murals which use anamorphosis techniques to create fixed artworks that are nevertheless dynamic and surprising depending on where a spectator stands in relation to the work. A famous example of this is Holbein’s *The Ambassadors* (1533) (see Figure 3 and Figure 4), which Lacan appropriates for his twentieth-century neobaroque theorizing. For Lacan, this technique makes the spectator aware of their own gaze, and thus facilitates subjectification.⁶⁰

59 Jill Dolan’s *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* is helpful here; she argues that the spectator’s body or social positionality are already politically situated. Importantly, Dolan establishes that certain spectators are already “excluded” from the assumptions of representation and spectatorship, and thus occupy an “outsider’s critical position” (2). In my synthesizing of the ideas of Dolan with Ziarek, “exclusion” can be re-understood as the preconditions for *haunting*; and this can occur in multiple places in the aesthetic equation of artist-work-spectator.

60 See Maria Scott, “Lacan’s ‘Of the Gaze as Objet Petit a’ as Anamorphic Discourse,” for more discussion of Lacan’s engagement with anamorphosis in his seminars and his theoretical constructions.



Figure 3: Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533). Wikimedia commons.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hans_Holbein_the_Younger_-_The_Ambassadors_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

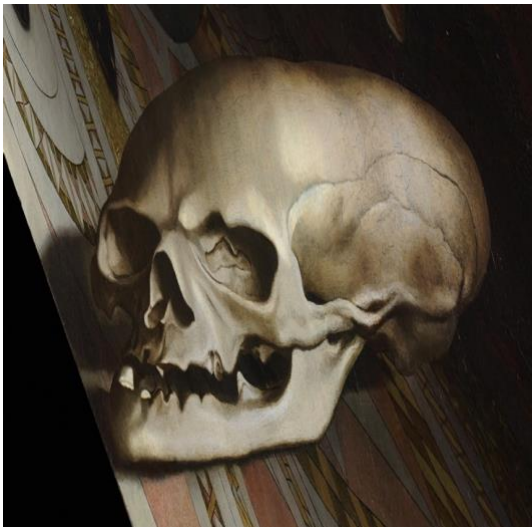


Figure 4: Close-up and changed perspective of the anamorphic skull in the foreground of Holbein's painting. The skull can only be seen when the spectator shifts their point of view of the painting. Wikimedia commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Holbein_Skull.jpg

In fact, Mieke Bal points to self-conscious spectatorship as fundamental to Baroque aesthetics and as pivotal in the historical development of Western epistemology

and subjectivity. She also considers this element fundamental to her own theorizing of baroque aesthetics as productive for reorganizing subject-object relationships:

During the Baroque, the awareness of point of view led, for the first time in Western history, to something we now call self-reflection, a self-consciousness of the human individual. This, in turn, led to irony in the modern sense, an irony that does not typecast the incommensurable other, as in caricatures of types, but includes the self in the critical representation of another who is thereby commensurable. This represents a crucial transformation in the relation between the Western subject and the world around her. The primary characteristic of a baroque point of view is that *the subject becomes vulnerable to the impact of the object*. (Quoting Caravaggio 28, added emphasis)

This vulnerability of the subject is the initiation of self-conscious intersubjectivity: recognition that subject-object relationships, as well as other hierarchical relationships, are not fixed and are, furthermore, negotiable. In the tradition of aesthetics, the subject is assumed to be an ideal, detached perspective; but this is “a position of withdrawal, a way of fleeing” the truth of being implicated in some choice (De Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity* 74-75). According to neobaroque theorists like Bal and Lacan, however, baroque aesthetics disrupt the illusion of impartiality or detachment by emphasizing embodiment and, by extension, choice.

Therefore, the feminist baroque aesthetics that I theorize here convenes a complex aesthetic event that includes *forms* that can be described as “baroque” in the ways that Wölfflin or other neobaroque theorists would define them, as well as self-conscious *spectatorship* of those forms. We might say that feminist baroque aesthetics is a *situated aesthetics* in the vein of Donna Haraway’s “situated knowledges,” her 1988 argument for “the view from the body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity” as basis for feminist scientific knowledge (589). This contrast of *embodied* experience to *ideal* vision in Haraway’s theory recalls the baroque-classicism opposition established by cultural critics

at the turn of the twentieth century. While all the novels in this study craft narratives that stimulate self-consciousness of positionality—in relation to the work of reading a difficult text, at least—this sense of baroque and ideal *bodies* that negotiate control of a narrative will serve as a central focus in my discussion of Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (Chapter 3).

The situated aesthetics facilitate a feminist *haunting*. This is due in part to the revolution/melancholy dialectic that Ziarek describes, which activates a potentiality that *persists as paradox*, an aporia; not merely “disidentification” but an *identification with impossibility*. Jacques Rancière argues that “subjectivization is a process of disidentification,” meaning, roughly, that political positioning involves denying identity as much as claiming identity (“Politics” 61-62). José Muñoz’s influential theory of “disidentifications” similarly involves a negotiation *between* normative and abject identifications, which can become a strategy of survival for the socially or politically excluded. I distinguish a theory of feminist aesthetics that considers *haunting* an identification within *and* outside of an artwork (both positive and negative identification, we might say), an *active presence* that is defined by its simultaneous weakness and power. A feminist baroque configuration of forms and spectatorship sets up (situated) haunting as a position *in relation to* classical, or normative, history. In this study, this inside-and-outside dynamic is further emphasized by the Surplus/Trafficked Women tropes that define the limits of legitimate white womanhood in the interwar transatlantic imaginary. These narratives and the characters within them move against these limits.

Baroque Modernism and Modernist Baroque: New Perspectives

This study reconstellates women's writing in the interwar period as well as the relationship of modernism to neobaroque discourses. I re-situate our understanding of Baroque aesthetics within cultural and ideological debates at the turn of the twentieth century, when cultural critics from Friedrich Nietzsche to Walter Benjamin not only constructed a classical/baroque dichotomy to describe transhistorical aesthetics but activated this binary to diagnose their own historical crises. I also define a "situated aesthetics" as the basis of a feminist baroque theory, emphasizing the radical position of women's modernism as well as the baroque aesthetic principle of intimate spectatorship, which renders subjectivication explicit, embodied, and self-conscious. The feminist baroque is both an aesthetic and a reading practice that facilitates critical engagement with experiences of "excess" and "exclusion" (like the false choice between Surplus and Trafficked Women), as well as recognition of the turbulent forces of "expansion" and "retraction" which configure not only baroque forms, but a baroque perspective of history. I identify these dynamics in the interwar contexts of the novels explored in the following chapters, and in the reading experience these modernist narratives afford.

Furthermore, critical delineations of both the Baroque and Modernism as historically-situated *perspectives* allows for the terms themselves to be understood as *negotiable relationships*. I suggest that the "baroque" as an aesthetic and historical-critical framework helps to conceptualize and configure the *incompleteness* of both the "interwar" and "modernism" as periods and concepts. So, like the "fold" which Mieke Bal proposes as an argument in itself to reorganize and dissolve hierarchies and disjunctions between subjects and objects, between epistemology and ontology, the

concept of the “interwar”—an announcement of both relief and inevitability, and relying on a retrospective, even totalizing point of view—works as its own argument. This study’s juxtaposition of feminist baroque aesthetics and the interwar historical context reorganizes and renegotiates the relationships between texts, readers, and modernism, as well as between subjects, nations, and war. The “interwar” is its own vanishing point that, like a baroque fold, can introduce possibilities as well as a self-consciousness of responsibility in relation to those possibilities.

Overview of Chapters

Writing Against History examines four interwar novels by transatlantic modernist women in terms of their construction of feminist aesthetics that trace the limits of the Surplus/Trafficked Women sexual-racial imaginary through engagements with baroque forms. Each chapter explores a single novel in terms of a central baroque element that expresses *and* complicates its modernist and interwar contexts. Attention to a single novel in each chapter allows for an extended exploration of the different ways the texts grapple with narrative forms that might convey coercions of intimacy on different levels, through character, narrative voice, and structure, and to connect each novel’s thematic and formal elements to a central feminist baroque effect. Taking each novel in turn also demonstrates how feminist baroque aesthetics work in distinct and widely varying ways rather than in the same ways across separate texts. And yet some similarities also emerge, such as the use of *mise en abyme*, elliptical narratives and typography, the construction of uncertainty in narrative integrity and authority, and ambiguous, open endings.

Importantly, each of these novels looks backwards to a near past while refusing to coerce a future. In this way, these novels expand and retract within the interwar period

itself: looking back from their contemporary present often only so far as the Great War, and then anticipating but never crossing the threshold into the start of another world war (even when they were written or published after the Second World War had already begun). The feminist baroque aesthetics of these interwar texts thus create narrative space not only to reflect on what war and colonial-patriarchal violence or exploitative imperial ambition has wrought but also to recognize where different choices must be made.

I have organized these chapters so that they follow the Surplus/Trafficked Women dichotomy of gendered control and sexual exploitation. In Part One, I discuss novels by Virginia Woolf and Elizabeth Bowen. Each of these novels centers on a national symbol of ordered domestic space—the English Manor House and the Anglo-Irish Big House. Within these national-domestic spaces, patriotic expectations for reproductive, married lives that fortify colonial-patriarchal power from within are put in tension with the disintegrative thrust of their exclusionary or violent implications as well as undermined by alternative (queer) possibilities. In Part Two, I discuss novels by Djuna Barnes and Jean Rhys. These texts make use cosmopolitan spaces and transient lifestyles to represent mobility, ambiguous identities, and disaffiliation. A cast of international and expatriate characters drift between temporary living spaces and temporary lovers. These latter narratives also strain between opposing forces: the centrifugal and explosive dynamic of scattered identities and fluid sexuality, and the centripetal pull of love and companionship.

These chapters also follow a deliberate chronological order that reproduces the *looping* effect of the novels' expansions and retractions within the interwar years.⁶¹ I

⁶¹ I am influenced by Paul Saint-Amour's *Tense Future* in this sense of "looping." Saint-Amour draws on both trauma studies and postcolonial studies to reconsider the forms and *affects* of interwar modernism.

begin with Woolf's 1941 novel, *Between the Acts*, written as the Germans were already dropping bombs in London—including on Woolf's home and the Hogarth Press, where she and her husband, Leonard, lived and worked. Woolf's novel resists closure by ending with the evocative line, "The curtains rose" (BA 149), which sets the stage, so to speak, for the rest of the dissertation, and performatively invites us to continue our consideration of feminist baroque texts. The subsequent chapters go on to discuss novels that were published in 1929, 1936, and 1939, respectively, thus taking us backwards and forwards again within the interwar period, just up to the impending actuality of World War Two.

Chapter One considers Virginia Woolf's critical essays about Elizabethan drama and the development of audience engagement in English literary forms. I argue that Woolf's final novel, *Between the Acts*, is an "induction novel" that recuperates the Baroque Induction from Elizabethan drama. This formal effect causes uncertainty in the authority and integrity of the text, which might facilitate self-consciousness about a reader's responsibility. Importantly, Woolf's novel, like Elizabethan Inductions, also prepares readers to engage with challenges ahead. Woolf's feminist baroque text engages modern reader-audiences in recognizing not only their domestic affiliations but also a responsibility to negotiate ongoing coerced intimacies and battles that spread beyond English village gatherings. Set in the summer of 1939 just before Britain declared war on Germany, the challenges most immediate for Woolf and her audience included fascism, total war, and the possible collapse of English society.

Saint-Amour also works against a modernist studies tradition of "splitting ... the interwar period, disposing 'high' and 'late' modernism on either side of the 1929 crisis" (35), proceeding instead with his "proleptic" and "*pre-traumatic*" heuristic that works as a counter-chronologic of the interwar, approaching it more like a (culturally-produced) state of mind, thus allowing both the interwar and modernism to be explored as "loops" and "suspending" (35).

Chapter Two argues that Elizabeth Bowen's 1929 novel about the Irish War of Independence, *The Last September*, recreates a tension between preservation and decay in both theme and narrative discourse. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's theory of Baroque allegory and ruins, I argue that Bowen's feminist baroque text emphasizes incompleteness, connecting the failed marriage plot of Lois Farquar to the "abortive birth" of an Irish Republic arising from the ruins of the Irish Big House (*LS* 303). A feminist baroque construction of suspended tension between creation and death creates narrative and imaginative space for the reader to contemplate the consequences of destructive violence as well as alternative plots for intimate relationships to be mutually negotiated.

Chapter Three marks a shift to discuss a text no longer anchored by aristocratic homes to distinct national landscapes. Instead, Djuna Barnes's most famous novel, *Nightwood*, travels through circus rings, urban cafés, and temporary residences that span European cities and even American woods. Its pages are populated by characters with no familial or national ties to each other or to their surroundings, and by characters whose identities are ambiguous, concealed, or invented. This scattered, disorienting and disintegrating quality is counterbalanced by a pursuit of love that might re-integrate and sustain life in the context of economic, spiritual, and social postwar reconstruction. Drawing on Dalia Judovitz's definition of "baroque bodies," I argue that Barnes's narrative experimentalism not only explores the limits of authority to inscribe and proscribe bodies but also demonstrates how classical essentialism can be resisted. Importantly, Barnes's feminist baroque text transforms both the narrative and the disaffiliated figures within it into baroque bodies, and thus the reading experience becomes an occasion for recognizing intersubjectivity.

My final chapter argues that Jean Rhys's last interwar novel, *Good Morning, Midnight*, makes use of textual and imagined voids to recast a cosmopolitan interwar period as a privileged space. While all the texts in this study make use of a feminist baroque *mise en abyme* effect, I argue that Rhys's novel relies on this form as an overall structural device. I distinguish Rhys's construction of a feminist baroque *mise en abyme* from André Gide's appropriation of that Baroque form for his own narrative experiments at the turn of the twentieth century, however. Rather than effecting a kind of self-indulgence which fortifies a male artist or authoritative subject, Rhys's *mise en abyme* ultimately makes fun of it/herself while also demonstrating that fortification is futile for sexualized and colonial *others*. Degradation and fragmentation are multiplied in order to *extend* humiliation (across a cosmopolitan space, or across a colonial modernity). I call this an ironic *mise en abyme*. Furthermore, the text extends the text's *affect* to the reader in an experience of discomfort and confusion via a narrative structure characterized by fragmentation, repetition, proliferation, and ellipses.

The conclusion takes up the question or possibility that Rhys's text leaves in the final performative ellipsis on its final page: Rhys's three dots simultaneously repeat and resist a period, and in this way the novel, and this dissertation, *extends*, rather than forecloses on, consideration of the interwar period and the responsibility to negotiate coercive intimacies amid incommensurable political and social agendas. The conclusion turns to the question of love: the responsibility of love, and the possibility of love and justice. The conclusion also moves beyond the limits of interwar modernism that negotiates white, middle-class womanhood. Looking back to a Counter-Reformation Baroque sculpture of Bernini, forward through the interwar feminist baroque of a Harlem

Renaissance novel by Nella Larsen, and then finally to the postcolonial feminist baroque narrative of Jamaica Kincaid, I trace the feminist aesthetic *potential* of the baroque through different contexts of what we can call Atlantic modernity/ism.

The four modernist texts foregrounded in this dissertation expand and retract along the delineations and illusions of white womanhood as imagined by colonial-patriarchal fears during the interwar years. But they do not, in the end, overcome them. These texts move up against (racial, gender) otherness and other (nonheteronormative, non-reproductive) ways of loving, but they also stop short of asserting a vision for a different future. Perhaps these writers and these texts could not risk losing the false sense of safety—in whiteness, in womanhood—promoted by a colonial-patriarchal empire already gearing up for another war. Perhaps these texts give up. But these texts also point readers towards a feminist baroque potential. Drawing on the words of Audre Lorde in my conclusion, I concentrate the work of this dissertation and our feminist work going forward on the responsibility of recognition. This dissertation defines feminist baroque aesthetics as an opportunity to recognize the risks of encounter, to question allegiances, and to encourage difficult choices about participation in any projects which demand erasure of some perspective, some protestation, or some voice. This recognition will initiate a renegotiation of intimacies.

CHAPTER 1
THE BAROQUE “INDUCTION” AND VIRGINIA WOOLF’S *BETWEEN THE*
ACTS

*The programme? Have you got it? Let’s see what comes next [...].
First, there’s a prologue....” (Woolf, *Between the Acts* 109)*

Set in the summer of 1939, shortly before Great Britain would declare war on Germany, Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts* is a self-conscious “prologue” to yet another world war. She began drafting the novel in April of 1938 after Hitler had invaded Austria, recording in her diary that she had heard the Austrian national anthem “for the last time” followed by “a snatch of dance music.”⁶² This reference to the passing of a national anthem and the fragmentation of folk music through speakers has significance for the theme and style of her Pageant-Novel. She finished the novel “only in the most provisional sense” in February of 1941 (Hussey xlviii). Virginia Woolf committed suicide a few weeks later, on March 28. Her husband, Leonard, oversaw edits to the manuscript, which was published in July. This publication history of the text has been addressed in recent years by Mark Hussey, who has made the case that the text has to be considered as unauthorized, if not unfinished (xxxix).⁶³ That the text itself persists for us as *incomplete* or *uncertain* eerily echoes the sense within the novel that Miss La Trobe’s pageant has an uncertain start and ending, and an uncertain effect on its audience.

⁶² She commented on the Hitler invasion in her entry on 12 March, 1938. On 26 April, she writes that she is “sketching out a new book,” which will become *Between the Acts*. See *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 5.

⁶³ This chapter uses Hussey’s 2011 edition of the novel which restores Woolf’s final manuscript typography.

In this chapter, I argue that *Between the Acts* is a performative text that addresses the politics of engagement amid the uncertainty of a nation (always) (about to be) at war. I suggest that the novel can be read as a kind of feminist baroque “induction,” an appropriation of the popular form of dramatic prologue innovated by Elizabethan dramatists (with whom Woolf was fascinated). This Baroque form of prologue, which will be discussed below, served a metatheatrical purpose: to signal to the audience that the *work* of spectatorship is beginning. Like the other texts in this dissertation, *Between the Acts* ends ambiguously and provocatively. The novel resists closing by offering a final image of curtains *rising* before some next Act/act. The reader is thus always posed between two acts: between the moment before war, as understood in the summer of 1939, and what would follow. Or for the reader more literally: between the text and what comes after. In this chapter, I compare Woolf’s theorizing of aesthetic engagement in her essays about Elizabethan drama and the development of English literary forms with her narrative experimentalism in *Between the Acts* in order to describe her modernist and feminist baroque intervention.

The novel itself is set in the English countryside on the estate of the Olivers, where a village history pageant is hosted on a summer afternoon. The narrative traces, roughly, a twenty-four-hour period from the evening before the play to the evening afterwards. Within that frame, Woolf’s text explores how the national and domestic symbol of the English Manor House literally and figuratively sits on layers of violence. This idea and form of *nation* is fortified by patriotic expectations for heterosexually reproductive and domestic lives that consolidate imperial-patriarchal power. Woolf’s subversive and experimental narrative also challenges that inward, fortifying drive with

an outward-moving and disintegrative effect that reveals the former's violent implications as well as alternative—and queer—possibilities. These contrasting forces are configured through clashing aesthetic forms that pull and push at each other within the novel: a national pageant and the modern novel.

Virginia Woolf's aesthetic experimentalism, in both her essays and her fiction, often attempted to combine very different forms: for example, *The Waves* is notably a "playpoem" by her own description; and her abandoned manuscript, "The Pargiters," attempted to combine polemic essay and novel forms (and later became the separate pieces *Three Guineas* and *The Years*). Furthermore, the formal elements in these texts also carry out thematic work: the fluidity of form in *The Waves* performs and reproduces the fluidity of social identity addressed in its content; the rhetorical structure of a letter responding to a political solicitation shapes the political content of *Three Guineas*. Therefore, the formal experimentalism of Woolf's last novel, *Between the Acts*, which brings together the elements of village history pageant and manor house novel, was not necessarily new territory. And yet this final novel has been considered her "most striking," perhaps because of its combined political implications and disintegrative experimentalism.⁶⁴ Its historical context cannot be overlooked in this consideration: the text is striking because it emerges from an England at war, again, and the political urgency of the text has been read in this context.

Critics have thus considered the layering of discourses in *Between the Acts* in light of Woolf's political and feminist responses to fascism and war. Christine Froula, for example, emphasizes Woolf's positioning of women's speech in this novel (such as a

⁶⁴ Alex Clark, writing for the BBC in 2016.

rape victim's testimony against her attackers in the trial that Isa Oliver reads about in the paper, or in Isa's mixing of poetry with social dialogue) as a strategy to break down public/private barriers that shape English womanhood, thereby resisting the patriarchal structures that enable "Hitler" in the "everyday" (295). This gendered form of discursive resistance is repeated in Miss La Trobe's construction of "dialogic poetics" through her play (Froula 306), which enables an interpenetration of "the real" and performance. The repeating pattern of such deterritorializing dialogics in the novel, I suggest, works as a feminist *mise en abyme* aesthetic style that, rather than concentrating a sense of despair, assists the dissolution of what Froula identifies as artificial boundaries and "unnatural" structures—especially the structures of patriarchy and fascism (Froula 294).

Similarly, Natania Rosenfeld isolates Woolf's discourse in *Between the Acts* as a counter-fascism practice. Rosenfeld argues that *Between the Acts* reflects Woolf's attempt to create a more "democratic" discourse which forges a "more egalitarian relationship between author and audience," thus preventing discursive dictatorship (123). In order to do this, words, already being appropriated and destroyed by Hitler on the airwaves, must be acknowledged as both "autonomous" and meaningless. To diffuse the dictator's oppressive, mystifying words, Woolf's text first must defamiliarize language, especially in its constructions of (abusive) culture and history, then remake or relocate a language free from patriarchal symbolic meaning. Rosenfeld ultimately argues that the ending of *Between the Acts* reflects Woolf's conflicting hope/resignation about the war, a belief that it would destroy, but out of the "mud" a new, different language, and therefore story, might be created (136). I propose a reading of this novel that emphasizes the work of engagement rather than the inevitability of outcomes (of either war or language). It is

the inclusion of the dramatic form within the novel that shifts aesthetic potential, a potential Woolf found in the encounter between Elizabethan audiences and Elizabethan drama.

The Elizabethan Induction and Woolf's Genealogy of Aesthetic Engagement

The Elizabethan era of drama in English literary history coincides with the early stage of the Baroque period in European cultural history. It is perhaps fitting, then, that the Elizabethan Induction, a dramatic device at the beginning of a play, was developed as a solution for *introducing* the audience to a specific set of aesthetic problems that would be the animating concerns of Baroque aesthetics and philosophy. Put briefly, the induction helped transition an audience into its engagement with a play by foregrounding spectatorship as a responsibility that has to be performed—thus investing the audience with their own role. In Woolf's novel, this sense of audience responsibility is referenced indirectly and directly throughout the text, including the Oliver family patriarch's declaration that "Our part . . . is to be the audience. And a very important part too" (*BA* 41).

While there were various forms of this induction practice in the Elizabethan era, such as a "dumb show" that previewed the actions of the play, or dramatic allegories that introduced the arguments of the play, or even meta-plays that included actors playing audience members about to watch the play, all forms of the Elizabethan induction addressed the problem of "making the audience accept the dramatic illusion in the first place" by dramatizing the practice of spectatorship (Greenfield 1). This "problem" should be contextualized with historical developments in thinking about the complex relationship of spectator to representation, and of the relationship between *representation*

and *truth*—the epistemological and hermeneutical conundrum often referred to as “shadow and substance” (Greenfield 6). Consideration and representation of this dynamic undergoes an important transition in the sixteenth century from medieval allegorical representation to secular dramatic representation. And while the Elizabethan induction might have had a didactic mission to preserve the moral autonomy of the spectator, to proactively congratulate “him” on his ability to separate play from reality while simultaneously assuring him that the performance is for his benefit,⁶⁵ its baroque capability effectively muddled the distinctions between actor and audience, indeed, between performance and reality.⁶⁶

These baroque aesthetic experiments with subjectivity coincided with shifting social experiments with private mercantilism, globalization, and cultural identity. In sixteenth-century England, the clashes between Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation, as my Introduction references, had as much to do with global dominance as spiritual salvation.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the metaphysical problem of representing “truth” was inflected by the imperialist logistical and racial problems of maintaining national integrity at home while at the same time expanding imperial claims to resources and sovereignty across the globe. In this context, we can understand the baroque aesthetic turn to self-conscious awareness as entangled with tensions between

⁶⁵ I use the pronoun “him” self-consciously, putting it into quotes to emphasize the rhetorical conflation of spectator with “man” while also calling attention to the fact that an Elizabethan audience would have included women (and children), even if the prevailing theories of spectatorship would have excluded them.

⁶⁶ See for example the induction for Francis Beaumont’s 1607 play, *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, as a particularly problematic positioning of audience to play, and of actors to audience. Its comedic form destabilizes rather than solidifies the spectator’s position. Anna-Claire Simpson Steffen’s unpublished dissertation, *How to Do Things With Children*, includes an extended discussion of these effects.

⁶⁷ Jane Hwang Degenhardt argues that in Christopher Marlowe’s Early Modern text *Doctor Faustus*, for example, “spiritual matters take a backseat to imperial ambition, which is framed in a world history driven not by the Spirit but by a lust for power” (403).

home/national culture and governance on one hand, and global expansion and multicultural encounter, on the other. On the Elizabethan stage, a negotiation of “truth” is conducted *with* the audience and initiated through the induction: the audience is reminded not only of their responsibility as spectators, making them part of the performance, but the induction also makes the audience an “other” force within the theatre against which this problem of “truth” is being managed. In short, the dramatic formal element of the Baroque “induction” implicitly induces or introduces audiences into a sense of otherness by exploring the threatening possibility that otherness/self is *performed*. This aestheticization of a subject-object crisis complements the historical crises outlined in my dissertation’s Introduction, in both the Baroque period and in the Modernist period.

Though my reading of *Between the Acts* as a recuperation of the Elizabethan Induction is the only analysis that explicitly identifies this baroque form within Woolf’s text, there has been considerable critical attention to Woolf’s interest in the development of the reader-author relationship within English literary history. Woolf wrote explicitly about this interest across her writing life, and I wish to focus on two essays that map the genealogy of the reader-author relationship through Elizabethan drama. These essays are “Notes on an Elizabethan Play,” collected in her first *Common Reader* series (1925), and “Anon,” which was unfinished at the time of her death but was to be the introductory essay for a “Common History book” tracing the development of history via the development of English literature (Silver 356). As Brenda Silver has documented, Woolf’s reading and writing activity between 1938 and her death in 1941 included drafting *Between the Acts* and this other literary history project, and these projects were entangled together, both a response to her central concerns during this period: “the rise

and fall of civilizations; the nature of culture; the violence associated with patriarchy; and the relationships between continuity and disruption, art and society" (Silver 358).

In the earlier essay from 1925, however, Woolf meditates on the drastic differences between the productions and receptions of Elizabethan drama and modern novels, concluding that the differences are the result of the transition from live, "unlettered" audiences who engage—physically and emotionally—with an Elizabethan play in an afternoon, as a *crowd*, to the modern solitary, educated readers who develop intellectual responses to a text over a longer and disrupted time span: "the emotion all split up, dissipated and then woven together, slowly and gradually massed into a whole, in the novel; the emotion concentrated, generalised, heightened in the play" (54). Woolf is keen on the distinction between the "general" of the play and the "particular" of the novel (55), which might be related to her sense that Elizabethans and moderns view reality itself differently (49). This categorization of different aesthetic and historical senses of "reality" across the ages directly relates to Woolf's theory about the genealogy of aesthetics delineated in her later essay, "Anon," written in the lead up to WWII. In "Anon," Woolf suggests that the "general" of the Elizabethan era is the result of an as-yet-undifferentiated experience of (aesthetic) *play*, while the "particular" of the novel reflects the fragmentation of modern culture. Significantly, in her 1925 essay, Woolf suggests that "half the work of the dramatists, one feels, was done in the Elizabethan age by the public" (52), which describes her theory about the evolution of relationships between audience, text, and author that she will return to and develop in the later, unfinished essays.

The late essay, "Anon," focuses more specifically on the role of the author, or rather, the *changing* role of the author—the emergence of an author and a separate, passive audience as such from a literary tradition that formerly blurred the distinctions between author, art, and audience. As the title of the late essay suggests, Woolf explores the anonymous and collective nature of literary art in its early stages when, she suggests, literary art was as untethered and communal as birdsong and reflected an instinct common to all. This form eventually becomes fractured and refashioned according to the needs and forces of civilization. This introduces a concern Woolf is thinking about during the late 1930s, which she addresses in both the late essays and *Between the Acts*: that is, the co-construction of art and society. She reminds herself to always acknowledge this dynamic by writing, "Keep a running commentary upon the External" in her reading notes of the period (qtd. in Silver 360). This note refers to not only the social and material context of production, but also to the role that an audience plays in any production of art or literature. In *Between the Acts*, the contingency of the External to the production of art manifests in the porous experience of the pageant at the center of the novel, the interference of both nature and civilization—cows, rain, fighter jets, and, of course, an audience—in the production of Miss La Trobe's history play.

Brenda Silver draws a direct line, in fact, between the Anon of the essay and Miss La Trobe of *Between the Acts*, who she suggests is a descendant of Anon:

Anon, "sometimes man, sometimes woman," emerges from the essay as an outsider whose social isolation gave him or her the freedom to "say out loud what we feel, but are too proud to admit," and whose ability to tap the reservoir of common belief resulted in tolerance, if not acceptance, from all classes of society. Similarly, in the novel, Miss La Trobe's gifts are recognized and acknowledged by the community that otherwise scorns and ostracizes her: her gift for "getting things up," for bringing out people's talents, and for making individuals aware,

however momentarily, of the emotions hidden beneath their public faces and roles. (380)

Woolf's emphasis on gender fluidity for Anon is also passed down to Miss La Trobe, for the latter's masculinity, "Her abrupt manner and stocky figure; her thick ankles and sturdy shoes; her rapid decisions barked out in guttural accents" (BA 44), and her habit of pacing offstage like "a commander pacing his deck" (BA 43), along with her sexuality, is crucial to her "outsider" and thus "artist" status, which suggests that Woolf situates both gender identity and art in terms of subjectivity to the External. That is, Woolf's artist figures in "Anon" and *Between the Acts* not only produce art but also *embody*, allegorically, the idea of art itself, which allows Woolf to trace the entanglements of art and historical pressures at a particularized, corporeal level.

While Anon begins as a communal voice indistinguishable from the countryside and community from which it emerges (and therefore, her/his/its gender identity, and body, are not yet constructed as such), by the time Anon is "reincarnated" as Miss La Trobe in the modern age, s/he has been split *from* its context and split *into* so many pieces—"split into several languages" as "Society" develops according to economic, political, and technological changes—that *she* has become out of touch with her audience (Woolf qtd. in Silver 376). This estrangement between artist and audience is what has caused Anon's death in the poem and in English literary history. Woolf is acutely sensitive to this particular kind of estrangement as she is writing "Anon" and *Between the Acts*, a period in which she became increasingly isolated by wartime changes to her living, working, and publishing conditions. At the end of Woolf's late essay, "Anon is dead" because the fluid connection, or *identity*, between art, artist, and audience has been fragmented by the disjunctive processes of production and reception in the modern age—

but we must also consider whether Woolf imagined this kind of literary death of the “modern” artist as related to the existential threat of her own literal death due to modern total warfare as she is writing, and then whether the suspension of aesthetic forms and English history in her *Between the Acts* is a kind of attempt to delay both deaths (“Anon” 693).

By examining the baroque elements in Woolf’s novel, and by taking a baroque point of view of her aesthetic project—recognizing its ambivalent and contradictory tensions—my analysis deviates from other critical perspectives of Woolf’s modernist trajectory. Jed Esty, for example, has influentially categorized Woolf’s last novel as part of the *inward* turn of late modernism, which responded aesthetically to the political and economic retractions of the British Empire during and after World War Two. The tension between forms within the novel, as well as the tensions within various characters, points to a more ambiguous and less teleological interpretation of the political and cultural elements of the text. Rather than describing a historical trajectory in one direction or another, the novel shifts emphasis to a political potential that must be engaged by a reader.

Reading the essays “Anon” and “Notes on an Elizabethan Play” alongside *Between the Acts* provides an important insight about Woolf’s aesthetic project in her final novel. Significant for this discussion, for example, is Woolf’s situating of Elizabethan Drama as a pivotal midpoint between the incarnations of Anon and Miss La Trobe. By the era of Elizabethan plays, the formerly undifferentiated Anon is divided into the bodies of the actors and the words of the poet (“Anon” 689). But, crucially, the art itself, the play, “is still in part the work of the undifferentiated audience, [... a]nd the play

itself was still anonymous” because it “was a common product, written by one hand, but so moulded in transition that the author had no sense of property in it. It was in part the work of the audience” (690). This, of course, is the same observation Woolf makes in her much earlier essay on the Elizabethan play about the *collaboration* between author and audience.

In Woolf’s earlier essay about engagement and Elizabethan drama, Woolf distinguishes the earlier form from the modern novel in order to emphasize the very different audience experiences: one immediate, sensory, and materially connected to a place, time, and community; the other delayed, intellectual, solitary and abstract. Steve Ellis has argued that Woolf’s late, “1939 state” writing reveals Woolf’s preference for private book reading precisely because it offers (unlimited) time and space for a reader’s “personal creation,” and that Isa’s creative interactions with and between her reading materials in *Between the Acts* demonstrates this preference (196). In fact, Ellis implies an opposition between Miss La Trobe and Isa Oliver in which the former represents the dangerous implications of the chaotic and coerced experience of theatre in contrast to the productively imaginative experience of book reading, ultimately arguing that Woolf’s formal experiments in *Between the Acts* explore the ambivalent nature of theatre and its slippery relationship to fascist forms. While Ellis draws on an impressively wide range of Woolf’s writing, from her early to late career, he does not cite Woolf’s 1925 essay on Elizabethan Drama. In that essay we find what I suggest is an important clue to understanding the relationship of the novel form to drama in *Between the Acts*.

After distinguishing the Elizabethan play and modern novel as not only producing vastly different audience experiences but also as the result of disparate relationships to

reality, Woolf seems to call for a new reading/audience practice that draws on the strengths of *both* forms:

To join those territories and recognise the same man in different disguises we have to adjust and revise. But make the necessary alterations in perspective, draw in those filaments of sensibility which the moderns have so marvellously developed, use instead the ear and the eye which the moderns have so basely starved, hear words as they are laughed and shouted, not as they are printed in black letters on the page, see before your eyes the changing faces and living bodies of men and women—put yourself, in short, into a different but not more elementary stage of your reading development and then the true merits of Elizabethan drama will assert themselves. The power of the whole is undeniable. (“Notes on an Elizabethan Play” 56)

Woolf enjoins her reader not to discard the benefits of “developed” intellectual “sensibility” but to bring those evolved “filaments” into balance with the faculties an Elizabethan audience used to “hear words as they are laughed and shouted.” I suggest that *Between the Acts*—begun thirteen years later—is the culmination of Woolf’s formal experiments designed to foster that kind of engagement, an engagement that is self-aware, collaborative, and conducive to both emotional and intellectual response; that engages multiple senses to connect a reader to a world of “living bodies of men and women.”

By reading *Between the Acts* as a neobaroque-modernist “induction novel,” the text’s complicated metafictional theatrics are framed in terms of preparing the reader for engaging a (set of) problem(s): the problem of engagement, generally, just as the Elizabethan Induction addressed; but within that is also the historically specific problem of civilization at the brink of catastrophic world war; the problem of a society entangled with violence near and far; the problem of repeating violence as long as there is a structure of imperialism inflected by patriarchy; the problem of fractured culture for dealing with these problems; and so on. Using Woolf’s own theories about the evolution

of Anon (from an undifferentiated, ur-artform without distinction between art, author, and audience, nor between everyday experience, truth, and art, to the modern, fractured processes for producing and experiencing culture), and her positioning of the Elizabethan era of drama as a kind of significant midpoint, I suggest that *Between the Acts* is Woolf's aesthetic invocation to another (she hoped) era. Sally Greene has identified an important recognition by Woolf of a link between the artistic "explosion of activities in the Renaissance" and "the Modernist period, a period she invests with hope for a new age of 'infinite possibilities' for the novelist's art" (85). The resonances of violent national and imperial crises between the earlier age and her own early twentieth-century must also be considered a factor in Woolf's consideration of affinity, more so as she is working on "Anon" and *Between the Acts* while bombs destroy London, including her home and the Hogarth Press.

Between the Acts makes use of baroque and modernist aesthetics in order to construct a different engagement experience, a new reading practice, which is aware of the historical material contingency and responsibility of a reader's positionality while also accepting the impossibility of removing oneself from the performance and production of culture. In 1939, the responsibility of an audience carried immense stakes in the context of fascist spectacle and military enforcement of nationalist, gendered, and racist affiliations and exclusions that drew on both "the primitive appeal of ritual and tradition" as well as "the alienating, mediating aspects of modern art" (Kaplan 29). Woolf's novel engages with integrative forms of ritual, drawing on English traditions; it also engages with avant-garde techniques that force alienation, such as disembodied voices and fragmented music through speakers. I suggest that baroque self-awareness and

audience empowerment is facilitated through the novel's induction work and is an antidote to fascist totalitarian aesthetics.

We can read *Between the Acts* as a neobaroque induction not only because of its complicated meta-fictional (and theatrical) aesthetic function, but also because the narrative itself proliferates prologues while also structurally performing *as* a prologue. For example, the framing structure of pageant play set within a country manor novel designates, already, the framing narrative as a kind of prologue for the embedded play. More explicitly, the progress of the play never quite seems to come off cleanly because the imperfections of Miss La Trobe's production, coupled with the uncertainty of the audience, produce repeated false starts, missed cues, and miscommunication of meaning—for both actors and audience. The epigraph to this chapter, for example, dramatizes the uncertainty of Miss La Trobe's audience while also reflecting the uncertain reading experience of the novel itself, which results in the impossibility of knowing whether the “play” ever really starts.

The sentiment of the above epigraph echoes throughout the novel, in both framing narrative and pageant center: “What had they been saying?” Isa wonders as she enters the narrative, for example, as she tentatively tries to locate herself discursively (4). Meanwhile, a running motif throughout the text are references to “The audience [as always] assembling,” or *disassembling*, rather than assembled (BA 50, 51, 82). To compound this unsettled and disorienting effect, Miss La Trobe's behind-the-scenes comment that the afternoon setting at Pointz Hall “has the makings . . .” of a *new* play, “For another play always lay behind the play she had just written” suggests that the actions within the narrative, as well as the narrative itself, should be considered as

(always) prologue to something *else* (44). The ambivalent and oppositional forms of the play reinforce the ambiguity of this *something else*: the novel is thus a prologue to violent civilizational collapse *and/or* recuperation of wholeness and peace. Finally, the most explicit evidence that the novel functions as a prologue comes at the end of the text when the narrative announces, finally, that “The curtains rose” (149), thus marking the beginning, rather than the end, of the audience’s responsibility to *engage something*.

Baroque Aesthetics and *Between the Acts*

The Baroque context for the Elizabethan Induction allows for a baroque reading of Woolf’s text. A baroque approach considers the *work* of reading as, ironically, the *play* of engagement more generally. To put it another way, the *mise en abyme* structure of *Between the Acts* allows one to see the fictional audience’s engagement with the pageant at the center of the text as a reflection of the reader’s engagement with the novel, but the novel itself also represents—performs—the difficulties of reading and engagement. This repeating effect ultimately reveals that there is no “center” or “periphery” of the novel-play because, as with infinity, there is no origin. Once one accepts this, the real work begins, which is to see oneself as *part of* the work/play, which has always already been going on around us. It should be remembered, as my Introduction has outlined, and as I have referenced above in terms of the historical context for the innovation of the Elizabethan Induction: these explorations of the tensions between “center” and “periphery” of an aesthetic work are inflected by the historical tensions of expanding and retracting forces that would fortify cultural identities and extend global power. These aesthetic negotiations of control, again, reflect social negotiations of power that articulate through gendered forms of restraint or resistance.

This baroque understanding of engagement is literalized in the Elizabethan induction form, which both reflected and influenced the changing conceptions of spectacle and spectatorship in the sixteenth century—in fact, as William Egginton suggests, the complicated aesthetic construction of “the theater in the theater,” which emerged in the sixteenth century, exemplifies the spatial and epistemological “trickery” foundational to baroque aesthetics (13, 16). Moreover, Egginton explains that

one of the effects of baroque trickery is to engage or compromise the viewer in the represented space—to try to blend or bleed the distinction between the space of the spectator and that of the representation. The play between the frame or border separating these two spaces and the dissolution of that frame is paramount in baroque artifacts, and represents what is perhaps most recognizable about baroque style. (16)

With this definition and framing, the baroque dynamics of *Between the Acts* become much more legible, for what is fundamental to “baroque style” is also fundamental to Woolf’s text, namely the implication—the “compromise”—of the reader within the “represented space,” and the “dissolution” of the boundary “between the space of the spectator and that of the representation.” Importantly, this takes place on two levels in *Between the Acts*: the compromised pageant embedded within the narrative, and the compromise between the pageant and the narrative itself. In Woolf’s feminist neobaroque project, an awareness of positionality and *relation to* spectacle, not simply the dissolve of boundaries, is paramount. This new aesthetic practice must combine the faculties of both “audience” and “reader.”

While some critics have looked to postmodern theory to explore Woolf’s aesthetic effects, I suggest that Woolf’s own interest in Elizabethan drama points us to another

aesthetic model.⁶⁸ Woolf's feminist baroque modernism doesn't simply *anticipate* postmodern deconstruction of the sensible and epistemological regimes of modern representation and interpretation, but, "rather, deconstruction can be shown to be *already at work* in [Baroque] texts" (Egginton 28, added emphasis). And this deconstructive capability can be considered as related to the metaphysical and historical crises of the Counter-Reformation, as noted above and in my dissertation's Introduction. This backwards-looking (rather than anticipating) aesthetic perspective also recalls the reculturation of baroque aesthetics during the interwar period, also outlined in my Introduction.

The resonances between early twentieth-century modernism and the Baroque remind us that "modernity is organized philosophically around the *baroque* dilemma" (Egginton 28, added emphasis). The "baroque dilemma" is, in short, "the problem of truth as a function of appearances" (Egginton 26), which recapitulates the ancient pursuit of a rational solution to the essence vs. performance (or "shadow and substance") problem. But, importantly, the baroque perspective shifts emphasis to doubt, reorganizes the hierarchies of "essence" and "performance," and, perhaps most significantly, blurs the distinctions between them. Egginton argues that the historical Baroque period offered "the *perfection* of [the dilemma's] cultural expression" (26, added emphasis). While Woolf's genealogical theory of aesthetics as delineated in "Anon" differs somewhat from Egginton's, she similarly isolates the Elizabethan era of drama as an important milestone in the evolution of aesthetics in English literature, and I propose that she wishes to re-

⁶⁸ See for example, Bonnie Kime Scott, *Refiguring Modernism*, and Pamela Caughie, *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism*.

infuse modern narrative aesthetics with the aesthetics of the former era via her experiment in *Between the Acts*.

In a different way, Jessica Berman has also considered (neo)baroque philosophy and aesthetics as useful for understanding Woolf's feminist aesthetics more generally, focusing on the ethical implications of baroque's disturbance of epistemological and ontological categories and hierarchies. Berman turns to neobaroque aesthetics and philosophy to describe an alternative aesthetics that doesn't divide epistemological and ontological approaches to beauty or ethics but *folds* them. Drawing on postmodern reformulations of baroque aesthetics, Berman makes use of Mieke Bal's sense of a feminist potential in the baroque capability of subject-object and subject-subject intersubjectivity (instantiated in the baroque fold, which I elaborate on in my Introduction to this dissertation), which undoes rigid hierarchies and categorizations while preserving otherness.

Important for Berman—and relevant to this dissertation—is how the baroque aesthetics of the fold configures in Woolf's writing an ethics of intimacy without demanding “familiarity, normativity, or consensus” (151). Furthermore, Berman's exploration of the feminist baroque capability of Woolf's aesthetics lays the groundwork for re-seeing what Woolf's critics—contemporary and recent—have called her “ambivalence” as, rather, her particular feminist intervention. I draw a line from Berman's analysis to Woolf's own interest in the aesthetic experience of Elizabethan play-goers and playwrights: what Woolf isolates as significant to Elizabethan aesthetics, which I have situated within the Baroque, is the capacity for intersubjective co-

construction of aesthetic experience. Woolf's feminist baroque work translates *coercions* of intimacy into self-conscious *negotiations with* intimacies.

A Baroque Feminist Practice of Interruption

Between the Acts situates the family and land of Pointz Hall, where the narrative takes place, within the long history of England, the longer history of empire, and the even longer history of the planet. Importantly, however, this historical situating requires narrative and symbolic organization in order to be read *as history*. Within the very first paragraphs of the text, we learn that the “graves in the churchyard” “prove” that the Olivers’ neighbors had been in the area “for centuries,” and the “scars made by the Britons; by the Romans, by the Elizabethan manor house; and by the plough, when they ploughed the hill to grow wheat in the Napoleonic wars” can still be seen from an airplane (3-4). While the conversation between Mr. Oliver (“of the Indian Civil Service, retired”) and Mrs. Haines (“wife of the gentleman farmer”) sets up the long relationship of cultivating land to cultivating civilization, as well as the current players’ roles in that drama, the discussion also establishes this history as a history of violence which requires dead bodies and scarred earth to “prove” that civilization was there.

A history of violence goes hand in hand with the construction of the domestic scene, emphasized by the odd juxtapositions in the following narrative description of the household: “The butler had been a soldier; had married a lady’s maid; and, under a glass case there was a watch that had stopped a bullet on the field of Waterloo” (6). The facts lay down in the sentence beside each other, offering significance by proximity rather than by logic, and thus we have a baroque construction: a metonymical movement that preserves the fragmentation of these individual subjects and objects while also forcing the

reader to recognize (or imaginatively construct) the relation between them, thereby drawing the reader into the narrative process as an active participant. The odd domestic description, which both suggests and evades the entanglements of war, labor, and patriarchy in the construction of civilization, indexes the themes of the novel as well as its aesthetic style. The description resonates with the repeating pattern of the novel, which stitches together overlapping narratives, leaving the stitches visible in what Christine Froula has described a “dialogic poetics” (306), and what Maud Ellman has described as a “tapestry [rather than] a triumphal progress toward a single goal” (93). Woolf does this most overtly by including a village pageant embedded within the text.

The history pageant, ostensibly a celebration of England, was a popular response to social and cultural instability in the first half of the twentieth century. It surged in frequency and production sizes particularly in the lead up to World War I, returned in the volatile 1930s, and was again popular in post-WWII England (see Bartie et al.). Woolf’s inclusion of the community pageant therefore serves more than her pursuit of formal complexity, for the popular tradition was already politically complicated, reflecting national and imperial cultural propaganda, as well as local variations. As historians have pointed out, while the pageants may have served as “‘spectacles of domination,’ in which power was extravagantly re-represented to communities by cultural elites,” they were also “highly adaptable” as a form “and could be turned to oppositional political purposes” (Bartie et al. 24). Importantly, “even where it does appear that specific political messages [about English identity and civic duty] were being sent to participants by pageant

organisers, these messages were not necessarily received and understood in a passive way” (Barie et al. 24).⁶⁹

Woolf takes advantage of the pervasive communal and politically-charged form to recreate the potential for audience participation and political dissent via the novel. Her appropriation of this nationalist and provincialized ritual also extends her feminist critique of the entwinement of patriarchy, imperialism, and violence with everyday folk culture. The evasiveness of the syntactic structure of the description of Pointz Hall’s domestic construction—the indirect implication of war and violence at the core of manor house order—is repeated in the pageant’s conspicuous absence of military figures and wars (“Why leave out the British Army? What’s history without the Army, eh?” an audience member asks); its indirect gesturing towards imperial violence and exploitation (Mrs. Manresa’s “diamonds and rubies had been dug out of the earth” by an imperialist profiteering husband);⁷⁰ and its inclusion of subtle domestic reiteration of these constructions of power and violence. Both the embedded pageant and the novel’s discursive style, then, participate in a subversive critique of English cultural construction by demonstrating its contradictory inward and outward thrusts that collude in demanding gender and sexual control.

By repeating England’s submerged history of violence as a subtle but pervasive pattern throughout the text, *Between the Acts* not only challenges representations of history as incomplete but also critiques the *practices* of representation. Crucially,

⁶⁹ Esty’s *Shrinking Island* also offers a literary history of the English pageant play in the first half of the twentieth century, emphasizing its transition from a post-Boer War device to foster an imperial identity via a celebration of local forms as incidental, to a 1930s late modernist form that drew on the local and communal forms as “an end in itself,” which reflected an anthropocentric turn inwards (55-61).

⁷⁰ *BA* p. 113 and p. 145, respectively.

Between the Acts doesn't offer an alternative history but deconstructs "history" as always already a fiction that erases certain kinds of violence while at the same time conscripting history's "audience" to participate in violence. Baroque aesthetics' deconstructive capacity facilitates Woolf's intervention by exposing the representations of history as layers of imperfect fictions: Mr. Oliver's "memories" of Napoleonic wars, the newspaper account that Isa reads about a rape of a young girl in a British army barracks, the mammoths of Piccadilly in Mrs. Swithin's favorite history book, and Miss La Trobe's staging of a Victorian picnic all stand side by side in the text much like the facts of Pointz Hall's domestic order lay together in the odd sentence described above.

It is the audience implicated at the center of the text—reflecting also, of course, the audience reading the text—which makes these facts and histories stand up and be recognized as imperfect, in both senses of that word. Woolf calls direct attention to this dynamic when an indirect narrative voice describes Giles Oliver's discomfort with both the ambiguity of the performance and the demand that he engage with it. With a metafictional reference to Woolf's own narrative text, Giles thinks of La Trobe's interminable pageant as an "[open book with] no conclusion to come to" (44). The narrator then suggests that "Words this afternoon ceased to lie flat in the sentence. They rose, became menacing and shook their fists at you" (44). That is, the work that *Between the Acts* does to emphasize the role of the pageant's audience—like the work that an induction does—reinforces the responsibility the reader.

While Ben Harker has situated Woolf's critique of historical representation in *Between the Acts* in terms of 1930s "popular front" avant-gardism in England that targeted continental fascism, he draws attention to Woolf's aesthetic and political

ambivalences. Though Woolf's embedded pageant (what Harker refers to as a "collaboration" between Woolf and La Trobe) successfully illustrates the impossibility of representing history as other than a cultural object or construction, while also emphasizing that actors and spectators are "all historical actors," Harker points out that Woolf deviates from other contemporary leftist productions of historical pageants by "shutting out the audience," by making it impossible for Miss La Trobe's audience to "synthesize" a meaning out of the fragments—e.g., the message of Miss La Trobe's climactic fragmented mirrors scene (Harker 448). Harker's implication is that Woolf's aesthetic project is not properly Brechtian. This is precisely where Woolf's aesthetic can be distinguished from other late modernist avant-garde aesthetics as *feminist baroque*: her project troubles the spaces between audience and performance, between fiction and real, and therefore it emphasizes the fluidity of spectacle and responsibility rather than projecting a delusion of autonomy, a delusion of pure political agency that can somehow escape the ideologies of a represented modernity.

The imagery of the much-discussed snake-choking-on-toad incident in the narrative illustrates what Woolf might have thought of Brechtian political autonomy. When Giles witnesses the horror of a toad and snake trapped in a death-embrace, he decides to put an end to the stalemate by stomping them to death. The narrative records the event in a *passive tense*, however: "The mass crushed and slithered. The white canvas on his tennis shoes was blood-stained and sticky. But it was action" (69). The indirect voice distances Giles from the violence he has participated in and records Giles's satisfaction ("Action relieved him") as if Giles could stand outside of the event as a critic, as though the "action" were something he could appreciate objectively and purely

analytically. Woolf's text includes the trace of violence that Woolf's audience should not ignore, however: the "blood on his shoes" remains to implicate Giles (69). Moreover, the text allows this blood of violence to linger rather than be resolved intellectually: immediately following this scene is an extra textual space break between paragraphs, a typographical blank space, a structural gap that opens up space for the text's audience to be moved by the implication of blood on his shoes.⁷¹

This typographical *interruption* of the reading experience reinforces Woolf's overall aesthetic project, which relies on interruptions to contest representations of history and the practices of representation.⁷² Importantly, the image of the snake-eating-toad also visualizes an aesthetic of interruption: it is the Ouroboros symbol, the eternal return, interrupted. This image of the "eternal return," in particular, connects Woolf's text to the interwar cultural debates about cycling civilizational rise and collapse—a preoccupation that coincides with the reculturation of Baroque aesthetics into modernist forms. Interruption configures a particular kind of feminist intervention, however. As Ewa Ziarek has theorized, feminist aesthetics are articulated as a "haunting" of history, as an *interruption* of historical time because "[gendered] absence from history implies that the destruction female creativity has the status of nonevent, of something that has never happened yet haunts and interrupts historical time" (93). But this creates a radical "potentiality" from which a feminist aesthetics can articulate—as a minor literature—out

71 This particular page break was in Woolf's final transcript, which is restored in Hussey's 2011 Cambridge edition. It was also in the first Hogarth Press, 1941, edition. It does not appear, however, in other print editions of the novel, which is one example of the impact Leonard Woolf's editorial changes had on Woolf's textual experiments.

72 See Lucio P. Ruotolo's 1986 monograph, which argues that Woolf uses interruption as an aesthetic device across her novel-writing career, and that its meaning evolves towards more anarchical beliefs in radical social transformation.

of historical exclusion. *Between the Acts* presents interruptions of both historical time *and* represented time via Miss La Trobe's history pageant, which is both interrupted and interrupts. The pageant and novel also interrupt each other, multiplying the effect as a kind of *mise en abyme* that disrupts complacent consumption by the audiences both within Woolf's text and reading it.

Indeed, interruption can be seen as an important motif running through the text, beginning with the interruption by Isa when she walks into the drawing room where Mr. Oliver and Mrs. Haines are discussing the history of graveyards and imperial scars as the novel opens on the evening before the pageant:

“But you don't remember [the Napoleonic wars] ...” Mrs. Haines began. No, not that. Still [Mr. Oliver] did remember—and he was about to tell them what, when there was a sound outside, and Isa, his son's wife, came in with her hair in pigtailed; she was wearing a dressing-gown with faded peacocks on it. She came in like a swan swimming its way; then was checked and stopped; was surprised to find people there; and lights burning. She had been sitting with her little boy who wasn't well, she apologized. What had they been saying? (4)

Isa interrupts Mr. Oliver's rendition of his childhood memories, which he substitutes for the imperial-war history he did not experience first-hand (linking both his subjecthood and his domestic upbringing to England's imperial identity). Isa is also interrupted, however, as the narrative describes her being “checked and stopped” by the presence of people in what she assumed would be a private, dark space (representing, perhaps, the baroque narrative's interruption of private reading experience). The confluence of interruptions is marked by the question (whether thought or spoken we can't be sure), “What had they been saying?” This question acts as an echo that resonates throughout the novel as various characters in various roles as audience or interlocutors interrupt conversations or performances and announce their uncertain relationship to a text that is already in progress.

On the day of the pageant, for example, as the family is balancing their regular patterns of domestic leisure-work with preparations for hosting the village pageant, the motif of interruption becomes even more explicit: “‘Am I,’ Isa apologized, ‘interrupting?’” Isa asks of Mr. Oliver, who she has woken out of a daydream of his past, and thus her interruption “destroy[s] youth and India,” but, at the same time, her interruption fixes Mr. Oliver’s attention on her, forcing him to recognize that he needs her to *reproduce* his youth, so to speak—his patriarchal legacy: “Indeed he was grateful to her, watching her as she strolled about the room, for continuing” (13). He is grateful to her for continuing his line. The move from imperial fantasy to patriarchal legacy in this minor moment tosses up the pervading thematics of Woolf’s text—of her oeuvre, really—in a subtle consolidation of politics and aesthetics via Isa’s *interruption*. (It is noteworthy that Woolf juxtaposes the words “interrupting” and “continuing” in this encounter, positioning Isa and Mr. Oliver in opposing discursive and social agendas.)

These domestic interruptions frame the interruptions that harry the production of Miss La Trobe’s play—a play with uncertain boundaries because of the generally interruptive experience of the audience and play, which interrupts, in turn, the flow between the novel and embedded pageant:

Then the play began. Was it, or was it not, the play? Chuff, chuff, chuff sounded from the bushes. It was the noise a machine makes when something has gone wrong. Some sat down hastily, others stopped talking guiltily. All looked at the bushes. For the stage was empty. Chuff, chuff, chuff the machine buzzed in the bushes. While they looked apprehensively and some finished their sentences, a small girl, like a rosebud in pink, advanced; took her stand on a mat, behind a conch, hung with leaves and piped:
Gentles and simples, I address you all . . .

So it was the play then. Or was it the prologue? (56, added emphasis)

The lingering question continues to undermine the progress of the pageant, just as the chuffing machine sound from the gramophone and the uneven attention of the audience mar the illusion that a performance attempts to produce. It also expresses an uncertainty that might reflect a self-consciousness about audience responsibility, or a skepticism of the author's expertise, or both.

The various interruptions throughout *Between the Acts*, in fact, produce similar moments of uncertainty as reflected in the collective audience/reader question in the quoted passage above, which allow doubts and self-awareness to emerge and take up their own space within the interrupted layers of the narrative. Jane Goldman has argued that Woolf's "moments of being," which have been considered in terms of Bergsonian *durée* and therefore possibly ineffective for historical critique, should be considered, instead, in light of Woolf's feminist materialist understanding of women's experience of history as already interrupted and interrupting. Furthermore, Goldman argues that Woolf's meditations on "moments" emphasize opportunities for "material intervention (rather than retreat into isolation)" and that "Woolf exposes a moment of illumination as also one of oppression, and as, therefore, one to be interrupted" (5). In fact, Goldman reads Woolf's overall aesthetic project as an "injunction to 'smash the moment'" which "speaks clearly to both realms (art and life), and in so doing connects them" (6). We can therefore read the interruptive power of *Between the Acts*, derived from its proliferating pattern of interruptions, as part of Woolf's ongoing feminist aesthetic project.⁷³

⁷³ See also Madelyn Detloff's discussion of the embedded pageant's feminist implications: she reads La Trobe's play as an "ironic performance" of British history which can deconstruct national and historical identifications that instrumentalize gender and sexuality for imperial projects (405).

Woolf's engagement not simply with "history" but with the practices of representing history in *Between the Acts* illustrates Woolf's understanding of ideology as another kind of collaboration between readers and texts, or between readers and authors, which serves to erase the practice of reading. Karin Westman has documented Woolf's engagement with "the histories, biographies, and edited letters sent to her for review as 'ideology'" and that Woolf's own critique of representations or studies of history "Anticipat[es] the work of Michel de Certeau, Michel Foucault, and [Dominick] LaCapra" because her reviews "seek to uncover [...] both the construction of history's narrative and the social consequences of a so-called 'objective' history upon present readers" (5, emphasis added).

Important for Woolf's explorations and critique of the *ideology of represented history* is her persistent attention to the relationship of a reader to a text. Westman traces this throughout Woolf's reviews and essays, from her earliest work at the beginning of the century, to her unfinished work at the start of the second world war, including her meditations on the evolving relationships between literature and audience in her unfinished "Anon," as well as her project in *Between the Acts*. What *Between the Acts* dramatizes is Woolf's abiding attention to "the imaginations of *both* the historian and the reader" (Westman 5, original emphasis). That is, the novel explores how texts—whether printed or spoken or performed—are the product of imaginative collaboration between an author and a reader, even when the text is called a "history" or a "memory"; crucially, Woolf's final novel foregrounds "the praxis" of production (de Certeau qtd. in Westman 5), offering an imperfect play embedded within an imperfect novel—stitches exposed, in a baroque move, to draw the reader's attention to their own reading of a (set of) text(s).

This is why the baroque induction is an ideal form for Woolf's aesthetic goals, because an induction calls attention to (dramatizes, really) the *practice of engagement*.

***Between the Acts* and Performative Language**

One of the ways *Between the Acts* draws the reader's attention to their own reading practice as a cultural performance is the text's foregrounding of the performative and political ontology of language itself. The text layers "languages" as a structure of cultural and class diversity, points to the slipperiness of language via nicknames and forgotten names, and even explicitly describes the thingness, or phenomenology, of words. For example, in the first of these cases, the framing "manor house" narrative juxtaposes poetry, newspaper texts, banal domestic conversation, and servant dialogue such that a reader must navigate a discursive labyrinth.⁷⁴ Isa's indirect discourse, in particular, blends romantic poetry and the language of domestic chores:

"Where we know not, where we go not, neither know nor care," she hummed. "Flying, rushing through the ambient, incandescent, summer silent..." The rhyme was "air." She put down her brush. She took up the telephone. "Three, four, eight, Pyecombe," she said. "Mrs. Oliver speaking.... What fish have you this morning? Cod? Halibut? Sole? Plaice?" "There to lose what binds us here," she murmured. "Soles. Filleted. In time for lunch please," she said aloud. (11)

While Isa is attempting to translate her romantic fancy for her "gentleman farmer" neighbor into a poem about the sensation of an airplane ride, with beating propeller whisking her away from her domestic routines of wife, mother, and housekeeper, her

⁷⁴ Woolf uses the word "labyrinth" in her unfinished essay "The Reader," which accompanied "Anon" in her unfinished "Common History Book." In that essay, she suggests that the modern reader is distinguished from the Elizabethan play-goer because he can separate himself enough from the text as to be able to see the "labyrinth of words" *as* labyrinth (698).

“inner” language is textually co-opted by a telephone conversation with the fishmonger to order lunch.

The passage is striking because its contrasting discourses don’t actually cause discord. Instead, the incongruencies seem to reinforce the inevitability of Isa’s domestic role, even suggesting that the rhythms of housekeeping can be as poetic as, well, poetry. This is a trick of the labyrinth, however, that performs language’s ideological function. But in the next lines the reader runs into a wall, a dead end, with the word “Abortive” (11), which not only reflects the narrative’s theme and aesthetics of interruption but also, performatively, reminds the reader of Isa’s material predicament: to reproduce the family line, which “descen[ds] from the Kings of Ireland,” and to embody matronly femininity, even when she prefers to be a “Sappho” or “one of the beautiful young men whose photographs adorned the weekly papers” (12). Isa’s queerness is thus alluded to in the negative, in its potential and impossible state, which is overwritten by the languages of heteronormative poetry and patriarchal domestic duty. And in a cruel compounding of Isa’s discursive imprisonment, we learn that even her ideologically coerced and limited attempts at poetic creation must be literally bound by economic and patriarchal expectations, for she wrote her poetry in a “book bound like an account book in case Giles suspected” (36).

The effect of layered discourses that expose language’s ideological function is repeated later when Isa, finding herself in the library with her father-in-law, entwines his imperialist legacy with her domestic office: “Many old men had only their India—old men in clubs, old men in rooms off Jermyn Street. She in her striped dress continued him, murmuring, in front of the book cases: ‘The moor is dark beneath the moon, rapid clouds

have drunk the last pale beams of even. . . . I have ordered the fish” (13, original ellipses). With another reference to the expectation that Isa “continued” the patriarchal blood-agenda, this encounter emphasizes the link between imperialism and that agenda, and therefore exposes the complicity between women’s patriarchal bloodline roles and their enabling of violence by *continuing the line*—reproducing the soldiers, politicians, and the bankers who maintain the nation and empire. Isa’s poetic-domestic turn in this scene—from imagining “rapid [war] clouds” gobbling up the earth to “order[ing] the fish”—enjambes, rather than negotiates, her domestic and cultural identities. *Between the Acts* connects British imperialism to internal constructions of English identity through gender and sexuality, including the racialized dynamics of these identities, for elsewhere Giles distances himself from William Dodge’s sexuality by interpellating him as a “half-bree[d]” (36).⁷⁵

More social stratification is carried out subtly through the practices of naming and un-naming. Importantly, nicknames not only proliferate in the text but denaturalize identity that is conferred via language. In other words, the unstable naming motif signals an artificiality of domestic and national order. For example, on one hand, Mrs. Swithin’s numerous nicknames create space between external and internal identifications, as the indirect discourse refers to her consistently as “Lucy,” while the household refers to her only by other names, from “Cindy” to “Old Flimsy.” On the other hand, the vastly different names for the cat are determined by a kind of domestic geography: “his drawing-room name Sung-Yen had undergone a kitchen change into Sunny” (23).

⁷⁵ For more discussion of the relationship between performance, performativity, and race in Woolf’s aesthetics, see Gretchen Gerzina’s “Virginia Woolf, Performing Race” in *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, ed. Maggie Humm, 2010.

Naming thus has multiple axes of social determination, reflecting various power structures related to not only gender and class, but also to patriarchal status, as Mrs. Swithin's nicknames announce her relationships and her (reproductive) social value. Furthermore, the cat's nicknames stand in not only for class difference but colonial positionality—reflected, again, in the domestic order. The humorous construction and deployment of the nicknaming motif creates one of the “atmospheric” or “unofficial” mediums through which domination is coerced and institutionalized (Suh 145).

This naming game serves as a form of *demographic control*, and its implications are developed in the discursive exclusion of William Dodge, the other prominently queer character in the novel besides La Trobe: none of the Pointz Hall residents can remember his name. Importantly, the erasure of his name coincides with his role in others' senses of personal integrity. The push and pull on acceptable sexuality reinforces the colonial-patriarchal maneuvering of power which is, as this dissertation argues, reflected in baroque aesthetics. Thus, Dodge's “ambivalence,” in the Freudian sense,⁷⁶ is reflected in his unnamings and tied to his homosexuality. Giles, for example, “knew not his name; but what his left hand was doing. It was a bit of luck—that he could despise him, not himself” (81). And, even though Dodge and Mrs. Swithin form an unlikely alliance—facilitated by their mutual social devaluation in the patriarchal scheme because she is past child-bearing age, and he is a homosexual—she cannot, or will not, remember his name: “She had forgotten his name. Yet she had singled him out” (50). Isa also forgets his name, even though she is a potential ally, given their shared queerness:

⁷⁶ Madelyn Detloff uses Freud's definition of “ambivalence” in order to link the exclusionary constructions of queerness and national identity: for example, Miss La Trobe's and William Dodge's queerness in Woolf's text performs an internal abjectness (ambivalence) that consolidates English *and* British subjecthood while also preparing “sacrificial subjects” for war (407).

“There’s something for your buttonhole, Mr....” she said, handing him a sprig of scented geranium.

“I’m William,” he said, taking the furry leaf and pressing it between thumb and finger.

“I’m Isa,” she answered. Then they talked as if they had known each other all their lives; which was odd, she said, as they always did, considering she’d known him perhaps one hour. Weren’t they, though, conspirators, seekers after hidden faces?” (83)

Despite Dodge’s repeated erasure by those who refuse his name, which approaches comedic performance in its unfortunate repetition, he responds here and to Mrs. Swithin by reminding them who he is. This allows Isa to also name herself, and what remains unspoken between them—their conspiracy of queerness—serves to both unite them and maintain their exclusion in an ambivalence of negative identification.

Besides these more subtle indications of discursive facilitation of violence and domination, *Between the Acts* also explicitly calls attention to the phenomenology of language by ascribing to words a thingness that reinforces the social implications of discourse. For example, the children’s nurses speak in colored, “transparent” confections that mystify the indirect narrator: “as they trundled they were talking—not shaping pellets of information or handing ideas from one to another, but rolling words, like sweets on their tongues; which, as they thinned to transparency, gave off pink, green, and sweetness” (8). The text implies that the servants’ discourse takes up a minimum of space while at the same time performs in accordance with their domestic purpose to pacify and delight the children. Meanwhile, the content of their conversation carries other significance for them, as they are discussing their work lives, love lives, and even commenting on their own practices of discursive mimicry: “This morning that sweetness was: ‘How cook had told ’im off about the asparagus; how when she rang I said: how it was a sweet costume with blouse to match;’ and that was leading to something about a

feller” (8). The indirectness as well as noticeably different language style maintains the opacity of their communication (despite the narrator’s assurance that their discourse is “transparent”), preserving their social “otherness” within the narrative. Tellingly, the nurse’s use of the word “sweet” in her recounting of what she said to her mistress echoes, and therefore mimics, the indirect narrator’s projection of “sweetness” onto their communication.⁷⁷

For Isa and Mrs. Haines, the phenomenology of words shapes their unspoken emotional experiences: “words made two rings, perfect rings, that floated them, herself and [Mr.] Haines, like two swans downstream”; and “Mrs. Haines was aware of the emotion circling them, excluding her. She waited, as one waits for the strain of an organ to die out before leaving church” (4, 5). Importantly, words not only take up space between and agitate individuals, but in their movement blur that intermediary space:

the words he said, handing her a teacup, handing her a tennis racquet, could so attach themselves to a certain spot in her; and thus lie between them like a wire, tingling, tangling, vibrating—she groped, in the depths of the looking-glass, for a word to fit the infinitely quick vibrations of the aeroplane propeller that she had seen once at dawn at Croydon. (11)

While the words “attach” *inside* her, they also configure the relationship “between them,” and like a spinning propeller whose blades move so fast that they become one, blurred, continuous halo, the words both call attention to the space between them and collapse it at the same time. The same might be said of the discursive practice of *Between the Acts* as a text, which both reveals the “tingling, tangling” of the *work* of discursive construction, but also reaches a velocity of discursive spinning which blurs the layered

⁷⁷ I use the word “mimic” in the sense Homi Bhabha has defined mimicry, in *The Location of Culture*, as an ironic repetition of a colonizer’s discourse which, in its dislocation to the colonized, signals not only difference from authenticity but a threat to authority (88).

discourses into a new cultural object. In the passage above, the search for a word *follows* the sensation of vibration, suggesting that language is the unnatural afterthought, a prosthesis. However, Bart Oliver, the family's patriarch, balks at this possibility and thinks in response to Mrs. Swithin's suggestion that "words" sometimes fail to communicate what is "behind the eyes": "'Thoughts without words,' her brother mused. 'Can that be?'" (40). The opposition between words and meaning is recapitulated by an opposition between men and women, and between familial roles.

Feminist Baroque Aesthetics and Critical Engagement

The attention to the ways that language constructs and reinforces control of culture does not diminish or overlook Woolf's understanding of the material experiences of gender and other identity differences. *Between the Acts*'s attention to the phenomenology of language, after all, reflects the power of language *on bodies*, including its power to classify and differentiate bodies. Woolf's aesthetic theory, as described in "Anon" and "Notes on an Elizabethan Play," draws links between language and embodiment while also lamenting a machination of language, via the printing press, that divides "words" from the work they might have been intended for, a more communal and experiential work. The conflicting roles of language—one primordial and the other modern—clash in *Between the Acts* and contribute to the text's ambivalence, as well as its aesthetic potential. Woolf's attention to a primordial/modern clash—a clash that she recuperates as aesthetic potential for her own narrative—may reflect the wider cultural debates of the interwar era about Baroque and Classicism in the arts, debates that also reflect critical entanglements with historical crises and transformations, particularly shifting global empires, as I reference in my Introduction.

In one of the text's most explicit references to violence—the reported rape of a young girl—the role of language, and narrative language in particular, in the facilitation of that violence is foregrounded:

For her generation the newspaper was a book; and, as her father-in-law had dropped the Times, she took it and read: “A horse with a green tail...” which was fantastic. Next, “The guard at Whitehall...” which was romantic and then, building word upon word she read: “The troopers told her the horse had a green tail; but she found it was just an ordinary horse. And they dragged her up to the barrack room where she was thrown upon a bed. Then one of the troopers removed part of her clothing, and she screamed and hit him about the face....” (15, original ellipses)

Two important moves lead into the description of the rape: first, the narrator locates newspaper reporting in terms of “book” literature, drawing a connection between passive entertainment, narrative construction of knowledge, and the contemporary circulation of information. Second, the indirect voice reveals that Isa is drawn into reading the article by its “fantastic” and “romantic” frameworks, much like the girl had been drawn into the barracks for sexual assault. Without *equating* Isa's vulnerability to the article's text with the girl's rape, because the rape, Isa soon understands, “was real; so real” (15), the text draws a connection between the two that implicates narrative itself. The implication is that narrative structures can facilitate violence by obscuring what is “real” and by exploiting a reader's desire to follow a narrative's promise of some individual prize, some individual discovery. At the same time, the nature of mechanized narrative (in both senses of narrative's technological production and its instrumentalization for civilization's progress) serves to isolate and disconnect individuals from each other, putting a different kind of demand on an individual's relationship with a narrative. Privatization of the narrative experience amplifies the *authoritative* power of the text and transforms it into *individual property*.

In its mechanical and fragmented form, the printed text allows author and reader to exchange ownership over “the real” but recuse responsibility for its existence or implications. This harkens back to the distinctions Woolf draws between private book reading and Elizabethan theatre-going: while Ellis argues that *Between the Acts* demonstrates a preference for the former, Isa’s access to the girl’s rape in this scene suggests that disrupted and private engagement problematically severs the possibility that Isa could ever intervene in the act of violence. The non-time of the newspaper transforms violence into both a constant and an inaccessible past, so why and how could she effect any change? Furthermore, the relation of the event in its indirect form provides the illusion of voice for the girl but effectively removes it, substituting for her voice the authority of a (male) reporter and a (male) editor: the newspaper-reader doesn’t see the transaction as illusion, however, only an exchange of authority. Isa is thus severed from the violence, and the girl is severed from her voice, even as the act of reading constructs an approximation of social engagement.

Woolf’s aesthetic theory, as we see in “Anon,” emphasizes the *non*-individual experience of art, however, proposing that the links between an author, the real, art, and the audience could be indistinguishable not in the service of obfuscation but of communion:

The audience was itself the singer; "Terly, terlow" they sang; and "By, by lullay" filling in the pauses, helping out with chorus. Every body shared in the emotion of Anons [sic] song, and supplied the story. [...] Anon is sometimes man; sometimes woman. He is the common voice singing out of doors. (“Anon” 680)

The emphasis in this passage is the fluidity between audience, singer, and song, all suspended in a common “emotion.” Woolf then points to class divisions in the service of civilization (“when the houses had come together in some clearing ring, and roads, often

flooded, often deep in mud, led from the cottage to the Manor, from the Manor to the Church”) as a stage in the development of modern alienation.⁷⁸ In this theory, classes alienated their labor and status to their separate languages: “the farm hands and the maid servants in the uncouth jargon of their native tongue. [...] Up stairs they spoke French” (“Anon” 383). Notably, the language geography of Pointz Hall follows a similar pattern, as we see in the examples of the nurses’ discourse and the different names for the house cat.

However, Woolf suggests that the “words” of Anon maintained a connection between the classes, and between civilization and nature:

It was Anon who gave voice to the old stories, who incited the peasants when he came to the back door to put off their working clothes and deck themselves in green leaves. He it was who found words for them to sing [...]. If we could see the village as it was before Chaucers [sic] time we should see tracks across the fields joining manor house to hovel [...] (“Anon” 383)

The “tingling, tangling” that Isa senses in *Between the Acts*, then, is a remnant of the work that Anon’s “words” contribute to the sounding of experience rather than the construction of opposition. It should be noted, however, that Woolf’s aesthetic history does not lament class division so much as broken communication between classes, as well as a break in the assumed mutual respect between classes. This is carried out by the splitting of languages and, through the role of education in the ability to read the written word, by the construction of an obstacle between the classes. This is why the Elizabethan

⁷⁸ Note that Woolf’s aesthetic theorizing in “Anon” and *Between the Acts* by looking backwards gets dangerously close to “flirting,” to borrow Erin Carlston’s phrasing, with fascist ideas about the pre-modern past as a uniting idea to *bind* together the unevenness of modern society. And Hobsbawm describes one strand of conservative fascist threats to liberal-democracies as “ideological nostalgia” that harkens back to a very distant past, especially an “imagined Middle Ages or feudal society, in which the existence of classes or economic groups was recognized, but the awful prospect of class struggle was kept at bay by the willing acceptance of social hierarchy” (114). The novel’s baroque capability, its transfer of potential to a reader, can mitigate this otherwise problematic nostalgic social theory.

crowd, made up of the illiterate and literate, represented a more ideal audience for Woolf, an audience that could “hear words as they are laughed and shouted, not as they are printed in black letters on the page” (“Notes on an Elizabethan Play” 56).

Woolf’s unfinished essay “Anon” explicitly isolates the role of the printing press in individuation, and, furthermore, theorizes the co-construction of “history” and the “individual”:

The printing press brought the past into existence. It brought into existence the man who is conscious of the past[,] the man who sees his time, against a background of the past; the man who first sees and shows himself to us. The first blow has been aimed at Anon when the authors [sic] name is attached to the book. The individual emerges. (385).

The mechanization of language (or literature) splits time into past/present/future, Anon into author/audience, and audience is further split by class into an unevenness that can no longer be bridged by Anon.⁷⁹

In the case of the newspaper in *Between the Acts*—perhaps the pinnacle of the printing press’s transformation of time and reality for Woolf’s “generation”—the rape of a girl by Whitehall guards is translated in such a way that Isa must “buil[d] word upon word,” to re-assemble facts in her drawing room, facts that are at once delivered via book-like narrative and yet divested of life, representing the *severing* of words from life, actually. While, as Froula argues, “By incorporating the real gang rape into her novel, she broaches the issue of civilization’s violence against women in a way that tears [...] fiction’s veil” (294-5), the significance of the newspaper medium suspends that violence

⁷⁹ Note that M.M. Bakhtin also theorized the generic significance of the development of literary “chronotope,” the construction of time and space in a literary text. He described an evolution of narrative forms that relied on a more general and unified chronotope in classical literature and transformed into a divided, linear, and spatially specific chronotope of modern narrative. This theory was developed in the interwar period, with an essay published in Russian in 1937. His theories were later collected and published in *The Dialogic Imagination*.

not as experience but as “accumulated facts” that are “enshrined in the vaults of national memory” (Christie 169). Delivered in such a way, the violence is already incorporated into the “past” and therefore inaccessible, even as Isa tries to imagine the scene in her drawing-room, a moment that is inevitably interrupted by domestic life when Mrs. Swithin enters the room and thus breaks, again, Isa’s (imaginative) link to the girl’s experience. Woolf’s induction novel calls attention to relationships between individual and reality, and between individual and individual, as mediated by not only language but also various cultural and state forms like the newspaper, the history pageant, legal statutes, and the novel itself. Like its Elizabethan influence, however, Woolf’s feminist baroque experiment invests the reader with the responsibility to engage, not just consume (or be consumed).

Just as in the earlier essay on Elizabethan Drama, however, Woolf does not actually suggest that literature can or should retreat or devolve to an earlier state. Woolf finds, moreover, limitations in the earlier forms as well: “For the anonymous playwright is irresponsible. [H]e flouts truth at the bidding of the audience. He cares only for the plot. We are left in the end without an end. The emotion is wasted” (“Anon” 693). Ultimately, Woolf’s conclusion in “Anon” is difficult to compass, for while she says that “theatre must be replaced by the theatre of the brain,” a configuration that seems to represent Woolf’s call to action for her audience, echoing her statement in a 1940 essay that “we can fight with the mind” (“Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid” 244), she also links private reading with the death of Anon. What, then, is Woolf’s aesthetic argument? What form can enable communion while at the same time respect difference? What form

can resist dominance of plot over story without wasting emotion? What form leads to effective engagement?

There is a connection to be made, I think, between the interrupted Ouroboros—the snake eating toad—and *Between the Acts*’s climactic scene in which Miss La Trobe’s cast brings out mirrors and shiny things and turns them on the audience, reflecting their embodiment and their fragmentation back to themselves: “And the audience saw themselves, not whole by any means, but at any rate sitting still” (133). The interrupted Ouroboros symbol conveys two entwined critiques: it deconstructs the narrative of circular or infinite inevitability by emphasizing both embodied victimhood and embodied choice (manifested in the image of Giles’s bloody shoes). It also, however, reinforces interruption as an aesthetic and political intervention (the Ouroboros interrupted, Giles’s interruption of the death-embrace). Significantly, Giles’s intervention complicates the analysis of the aesthetic, reminding us of the ambivalent capacity of interruption. The pageant’s climactic moment of audience self-awareness is also ambivalent:

So that was her little game! To show us up, as we are, here and how. All shifted, preened, minced; hands were raised, legs shifted. Even Bart, even Lucy, turned away. All evaded or shaded themselves—save Mrs. Manresa who, facing herself in the glass, used it as a glass; had out her mirror; powdered her nose; and moved one curl, disturbed by the breeze, to its place. (133)

Interruption isn’t enough: audience members are interrupted—shocked—by La Trobe’s very avant-garde technique, but it does not guarantee self-awareness, at least not an awareness that develops into productive critique. Instead, audience members transfer their discomfort onto Miss La Trobe (if there is any injustice on display, it is that she has unjustly turned mirrors upon us, they seem to say), or, in the case of Mrs. Manresa, the moment is appropriated for self-admiration. An aesthetic can only ever be ambivalent,

Woolf's project reminds us, because it is the reading practice that transforms aesthetic into (in)action: this is when the feminist spectator is engaged—compelled—to act.

In another unfinished essay written at the same time Woolf was working on “Anon” and *Between the Acts*, Woolf again tries to theorize the differences between modern readers and Elizabethan play audiences and to historicize the emergence of “the reader” as such. In “The Reader,” Woolf emphasizes the lack of critical distance, the lack of critical thinking, for play-going engagement: “but it is only when she reads that she comments,” she says of Anne Clifford, whose diary entry regarding her engagement with reading Chaucer is compared with her diary entry after attending a play (697). In a discarded section of the essay, however, Woolf also laments that modern readers “have lost the sound of the spoken word; all that the sight of the actors bodies suggests to the mind through the eye. We have lost the sense of being part of the audience” (699). So, again, Woolf seems to find both problematic and admirable characteristics in each case, whether audience or reader, locating the awareness of community, “living bodies,” and historical *presence*, including the intensity of now-time, in Elizabethan play-goers, and critical perspective, which allows for synthesis and analysis, in modern book-reading.

Woolf goes on to suggest in “The Reader” that a certain kind of reader-writer relationship emerged while “the play was still on the stage,” however, which is illustrated with Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), “for it is there that we find the writer completely conscious of his relation with the reader” (698). Interestingly, both the writer and the reader emerge because they divide themselves from the spectacle: “I am a spectator not an actor” Burton as author defines himself; “We are at a remove from the thing being treated. We are enjoying the spectacle of melancholy, not sharing its

anguish,” both author and reader announce (698). I suggest that the Burton example represents an intermediary, Baroque reader-author stage for Woolf, something between Elizabethan play-goers (who are part of the spectacle and may not be self-aware) and modern book-readers (who are decidedly separate from the spectacle and likely aware only of themselves), and which emphasizes the awareness of *positionality in relation to spectacle*, and a self-consciousness of roles *as* roles.⁸⁰ So, perhaps Woolf’s new form, the combining of modernist and baroque aesthetics into her late modernist, feminist neobaroque experiment, makes clearer what the Baroque playwrights and writers could only begin to explore; it brings their aesthetic potential to fruition because it can build on both a reader’s critical distance and an Elizabethan audience’s immersion.

Community and Failure: The Responsibility of Engagement

Self-conscious relations to others and to spectacle (of sight *and* sound) are therefore at the core of Woolf’s aesthetic project. While “spectacle” is not a term Woolf scholars have explored heavily, many readers have considered the significance of the audience in Woolf’s final novel in terms of her philosophy of individual and collective responsibilities and the political implications of Woolf’s aesthetics of one-and-many. Froula grounds Woolf’s aesthetics of community in terms of Bloomsbury Enlightenment, “where the work of art calls people not to see as one but to see differently and then seek to ‘persuade each other’ in arduous negotiation of an always changing *sensus communis*, or common understanding” (3). Mark Hussey has argued that Woolf’s textual theatrics in *Between the Acts* “speaks of a *rhythm* between the individual center and the public

⁸⁰ In other essays throughout her career, Woolf singled out Baroque writers as particularly effective for an engaging reading experience: besides Burton, she also admired Thomas Browne and Montaigne, for example.

circumference, each inseparably connected with the other,” and while “[t]his politics stresses unity and wholeness,” it also “preserves difference” (“‘I’ Rejected” 145, original emphasis). The missing element in these analyses—which each add valuable insights—is the stage at the center of *Between the Acts*.

The pageant at the center of Woolf’s novel realigns engagement practice to consider not only *oppositions* between author, audience, and art, or individual and community. The stage is a crucial mediator that reconstellates individual and community, transforming individuals into community and vice versa, all the while maintaining its own designation as artifice, as, literally, a creative platform. Reading Woolf’s theatre reviews, especially of the performances of *The Cherry Orchard* in 1920 and *Twelfth Night* in 1933, Penny Farfan traces Woolf’s developing theories of audience and reader, arguing that Woolf ultimately decides that the liveness of theatre, along with its demand that audience members negotiate between individual imagination and the corporeality of actors and other audience members, *enhances* critical perceptiveness. Important to this dynamic is the opportunity for what is expected (either by the actors or the audience) to be disrupted during a live performance.

In this disruption of repetition (of clichés or patriarchal plots, for example), *pace* Judith Butler, the audience’s agency can be enacted. Farfan argues, moreover, that *Between the Acts* demonstrates that the liveness and “illusion” of performance work together: “Yet if, in its physical immediacy, theatre exemplified more vividly than literature Woolf’s belief in the power of art to engender change, there remains a sense in *Between the Acts*, as in ‘A Sketch of the Past’ and ‘Anon,’ that illusion or artistic mediation is necessary for perception” (212-13). Farfan decides that Woolf uses

performance in *Between the Acts* as a “metaphor” for the political potential always already available in the meeting between art and the everyday to “stage a collaboration against the gender politics that lead to war” (213).

While Farfan isolates performance itself as the “common ground” on which radical change is created (213), Sally Greene identifies Woolf’s “Renaissance imaginary” as “the common ground on which Woolf and her common readers meet to embark on a creative rewriting of their collective story” (83, 85). Greene argues that Woolf’s second *Common Reader* collection invokes Elizabethan cultural history to “defamiliarize” both that history and cultural engagement more generally. What “emerges as a theme of the collection” is “the dialectic between the active and the contemplative life” (86). It seems that Woolf is working on this dialectic in her final novel, bringing “the active and contemplative” extremes of engagement together in the play/novel experiment.

In either case, however, it is the risk of failure, more than anything else, that animates the political potential of engagement. And the stakes of failure loom heavily over Woolf’s creative output during this time: a sense of urgency to connect with an audience, and for that audience to work together to interrupt the repeating patterns of violent control, pervades her final novel. Failure also animates *Between the Acts*. Readers fail. Intimacies between couples and family members fail. Audience fails. Artist fails. The village church, hoping to update lighting, fails to raise enough funds from the pageant. Perhaps most important is that expectations fail: this is the crux of the disappointment the pageant’s audience feels, and of the disappointment that Miss La Trobe feels: “She saw Giles Oliver with his back to the audience. [...] She hadn’t made them see. It was a failure, another damned failure!” (*Between the Acts*). These expectations are interrupted

by the existence of others, just as Mr. Streatfield's sentence is interrupted by fighter jets: "So that each of us who has enjoyed this pageant has still an opp...' The word was cut in two. A zoom severed it. Twelve aeroplanes in perfect formation like a flight of wild duck came overhead" (138). When the village assembly is finally interrupted by the fighter jets, the narrative is performatively interrupted by the realities of war, and, perhaps, by the consequences of *not* engaging with—fighting—national plots that lead to war.

Notably, Miss La Trobe fails to read her own play productively: "Her gift meant nothing. If they had understood their meaning; if they had known their parts; if the pearls had been real and the funds illimitable—it would have been a better gift" (150). Miss La Trobe represents not Anon in this moment but the author, even the dictator, who defines success in terms of a transfer of his own *individual* vision onto the audience, an *authoritative* transaction that is more like an imposition of an individual vision; thus, her sense of failure is a sense that "Her vision escaped her" (71). But, keeping in mind Farfan's performance theories, we can consider these failures as productive. Furthermore, we can consider that to the extent that La Trobe and even Woolf's narrative experiments fail, their feminist interventions succeed. To counter fascism—what Woolf saw as the culmination of an imperialist-patriarchal vision of social order—an aesthetic must not only *fail* to control and disseminate "vision" but must *interrupt* any momentum for a vision to cohere. If vision is agenda or expectation, as Walter Benjamin defines it in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, and if vision impedes a practice of *seeing*, as he goes on to argue, then Woolf's narrative recuperation of the Elizabethan induction serves to destabilize expectations (vision) in order that an audience can *see*.

Brenda Silver quotes a passage from the drafts of “Anon” and “The Reader” that no longer shows up in the published versions we have of these essays but which describes a transformative moment Woolf imagines for the Elizabethan audience: “There is a moment when *the audience sees itself*; given back; *separate, created*; and is no longer the master of the playwright, yet is not separate from him. A kind of *common life* unites them” (Woolf qtd. in Silver, “Virginia Woolf” 294, added emphasis). A “common life” is not the same as a shared vision, but is, rather, obscured by vision. A common life is recognized when one sees others in relation to the self, and vice versa. And what is the point of this recognition? What *Between the Acts*, read as an induction, finally stimulates is not a vision but a question: “what comes next?”⁸¹ Recognizing that we have to collaborate in the answer is the responsibility of engagement.

The next chapter will explore the ways that Elizabeth Bowen’s interwar novel about the Irish War for Independence transfers the responsibility of engagement to encounters with the ruined forms of colonial architecture on the Irish landscape, and to an encounter with a ruined discourse of Anglo-Irish hospitality.

⁸¹ In one of Woolf’s alternative conclusions for “Anon,” she suggested: “Nor is anon dead in ourselves. The crude early dramas still have the power to make us ask—as the audience asked—the child’s [sic] question: what comes next?” (qtd. in Silver “‘Anon’ and ‘The Reader’”, 424 n. 103). This question echoes, of course, a question the audience members ask in anticipation of Miss La Trobe’s pageant. The curtains rising at the end of the narrative seem to prompt us to ask that question for ourselves.

CHAPTER 2

BAROQUE RUINS IN ELIZABETH BOWEN'S *THE LAST SEPTEMBER*

"In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay. Allegory thereby declares itself to be beyond beauty. Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things. This explains the baroque cult of the ruin"
(Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama* 178).

Elizabeth Bowen's second novel, published in 1929, looks backwards to the end of the "Troubles" of 1919-1921, when the Irish War of Independence pitted Irish nationalists against the colonial occupation by Great Britain. The Anglo-Irish, who also considered themselves "Irish" after hundreds of years of settler colonialism, watched nervously from their Big Houses, which were being burned down around them by nationalist rebels. This nervous tension, this ongoing potential threat of conflagration and ruin, pervades Bowen's text as motif and discursive style. The central image of the home, Danielstown, anchors the text with symbolic gravity, an image of Anglo-Irish aristocracy and colonial order. At times the home even becomes another character in the narrative, looking out beyond its domestic borders at the growing threats from without, and judging its inhabitants' behavior to admonish threats to fortification from within.

This chapter explores this narrative tension in terms of the dialectical potential of the baroque ruin. This aesthetic function of ruins is theorized by Walter Benjamin in his study of baroque aesthetics in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, published the year before Bowen's novel. In Bowen's novel, a tension organizes the plot and discourse: a tension between Danielstown as home, and Danielstown as colonial ruin; between the

threat of ruins and the menace of actual ruins; and between preservation and death or decay. Importantly, this precarious balance between past and future is figured not only in (the threat of) ruined buildings but in ruined or aborted relationships between familial roles, marital roles, and sexual partners. The sense of incompleteness is structurally figured in the novel's surprising non-resolution of the marriage plot involving Lois Farquar. Both Lois Farquar and Danielstown disappear from the text abruptly before its close, leaving scorched earth and narrative gaps behind. The house and Lois—as well as other characters—share the fate of national and colonial plots, and when the narrative describes an ending, it is a paradox, an “abortive birth” that comes by “the design of order and panic” (*LS* 303). This feminist baroque peculiarity of suspended tension between creation and death creates narrative and imaginative space for the reader to contemplate the consequences of destructive violence as well as alternative plots for intimate relationships to be mutually negotiated.

The role of Lois's cousin in the novel, however, draws attention not only to how gender and sexuality are sites for hegemonic policing but also to the uneven distribution of the demands for domestic control between men and women. On one hand, the collapsing of sexual potential and national survival is a repeating pattern in the novel, and both Lois and Laurence experience social and narrative reminders about the precarious fate of “the race” that rests on their marital prospects (*LS* 58). On the other hand, Laurence's professed commitment to a modern and cosmopolitan *detachment* lends a humorous and celebratory atmosphere to the otherwise doomed sense of “extinction” that haunts Lois and her failed attempts at intimacy (42). While Laurence becomes emblematic of a modern and cosmopolitan future which is ushered in through the burning

down of the colonial Big House, Lois's uncertain future outside of domestic attachment is formalized by her disappearance from the text altogether.

My use of "cosmopolitan" in this chapter reflects the ambivalence it signaled during the interwar period, as opposed to the more idealistic usages of the term in recent decades. As Peter Kalliney outlines, "cosmopolitanism" had derogatory connotations during the interwar period. It was deployed by nationalists to charge disloyalty, and it was also used to describe social identities or populations which represented different kinds of threats to national or racial-patriarchal agendas, such as Jewish people and homosexuals (Kalliney 63).⁸² The word "cosmopolitan" is used only twice in the novel, once to describe Laurence's nighttime reveries, when he remembers ordering "meals in a cosmopolitan blur" (153), and Lois's friend Livvy refers to Marda Naylor as "rather cosmopolitan . . ." to explain why she would have a man—Laurence—in her room helping her pack (199, original ellipses). These instances use the term in the sense of "modern" or "modernism," which for Bowen and this text signify the *speed* of change coming from *outside* Danielstown and oppositional to its pace of life. Yet *both* cosmopolitan and nationalist impulses represent threats to Danielstown, the concrete form of Protestant Ascendancy, a political and economic tradition propped up by hundreds of years of bloody battles, confiscation, and legal exclusions.⁸³

⁸² Interestingly, at the end of the nineteenth century, Benjamin Disraeli gave a speech on "The Maintenance of Empire" which pitted nationalism and cosmopolitanism within British politics against each other in terms of maintenance or dissolution of the empire: inverting the sense of cosmopolitanism as a globally-situated perspective, Disraeli argues that pride in country, "an imperial country," will assure that "your sons [will] rise to paramount positions, and . . . command the respect of the world." Thus, in the British imaginary regarding internal consolidation of the colonies, cosmopolitanism is also the enemy of imperialism and of "sons" who might inherit the spoils.

⁸³ Bowen's ancestor, a Welshman, had become a landowner in Ireland after assisting Cromwell's campaign against Irish rebellion at the end of the seventeenth century. Bowen traces this history in *Bowen's Court*.

In her nonfiction history of her ancestral home, Elizabeth Bowen writes: “It was a clean end. Bowen’s Court never lived to be a ruin” (*Bowen’s Court* 459). The bittersweet tone in the statements belies a regret that her family’s Irish Big House in County Cork did *not* become a ruin. Years before Bowen’s Court was unceremoniously dismantled by its new owner, however, Bowen enshrined her house and the Anglo-Irish colonial legacy it represents in the ruins that figure in *The Last September*. Set primarily during the summer of 1920, the fictional Danielstown stands in for Bowen’s imagined fate for her family’s Bowen’s Court, a Big House built on grounds “acquired by use or misuse of power in the first place” (*Bowen’s Court* 455). It is telling that Bowen worked on her historical account of her family’s Irish home during World War Two—driven to nostalgic escape or regret by the conflagration around her that threatened to end civilization as she knew it. And in the afterword to this historical account, added some time after the end of the war, she wrote: “We have everything to dread from the dispossessed” (455). In a post-war context, she is probably thinking of Germany and the Nazis’ destructive obsession with “race and space” initiated by their own losses in the Great War. But she must also be thinking of the Irish nationalists, the dispossessed much closer to her own history.

In any case, ruins figure prominently in the novel: besides the shocking (yet foreshadowed) end to Danielstown, a defunct mill on the demesne serves as a setting for a climactic colonial encounter between Danielstown’s Anglo-Irish visitors and an IRA rebel. While ruins may be taken “as part of life” in Ireland (*Bowen’s Court* 17), I argue that a feminist baroque reading of Bowen’s text finds a link between the decaying or burned down colonial ruins on the Irish landscape and the difficult narrative discourse which performatively *ruins* intimacy between the text and reader. *The Last September*

activates ruins as both form and motif for a Benjaminian reckoning with historical structures that, in their allegorical effect, shock one into political awareness. Moreover, this chapter will argue that the narrative itself, with its retrospective point of view and peculiar, indirect and deflecting discourse, functions *as* a ruin. The historical ruins of a colonial strategy which had projected the ideals of hospitality over practices of economic and legal oppression are figured in both the ruined houses and mills on the Irish landscape and in the indirect and elliptical narrative discourse of Bowen's novel, as well as in its detached tone.

Crucially, as Bowen's ambiguous personal regret about her ancestral home suggests, a *ruin* is a form that marks both passing and continuance. Bowen's text provides a feminist baroque representation and critique of the relationships of a colonial past *within* a cosmopolitan or modernist future: that is, the feminist baroque text expresses and complicates its modernist and interwar contexts. Ultimately, I argue in this chapter that Bowen's performative text centers Anglo-Irish "hospitality" as a discursive mode with a particular national and colonial historical context that brings people and places together while simultaneously undermining intimacy.

Before expanding on the historical contexts of "hospitality" and the coloniality of the Irish Ascendancy, I will first draw some theoretical framing for the function of ruins in this text as it relates to my dissertation's arguments about baroque forms and feminist aesthetics. I argue that the ruins both within the narrative and as a performative style and structure for the narrative can be considered in the Benjaminian sense of ruins as the instantiation of baroque allegory—as configuring, in effect, *historicity*. The allegorical function of the ruin, according to Walter Benjamin in *The Origin of German Tragic*

Drama, is to distill the process of decay into a concrete image which holds the spectator accountable to time and space such that the “biographical historicity of the individual” is recognized (166). Note that Benjamin’s use of the term *allegory* should not be confused with the more common sense of allegory as a symbol. Benjamin’s theory of baroque allegory is situated in a historically and philosophically specific context of a world emptied of meaning, which allows an art form to perform *as* meaning.

While the technique—for Benjamin sees baroque allegory not only as a form but a way of *seeing*—arises in the Baroque period according to his analysis of the tradition of German drama, it persists as an aesthetic possibility into the twentieth century, where Benjamin sees an accumulation and intensification of objects with discarded meaning. The ruin’s partial (fragmentary) and *becoming* (decaying) nature helps to distinguish baroque allegory from the classical symbol: where the classical form projects eternal totality, the baroque form indexes decline and incompleteness. The baroque form also makes explicit the *constructedness* and *unevenness* of modern human experience, as opposed to obscuring human inconsistency, inequality, or failure, which classical forms achieve. Allegory, in this baroque mode, provides some recuperation of meaning without resorting to totalization; in fact, it reverses the process of substituting a form for meaning and instead emphasizes the process itself, the process of signifying, or the process of death and decay.

The ruins that appear in Bowen’s novel therefore don’t merely stand in for a general idea of colonialism in Ireland. If that were the case, then the text might simply be mourning the transition of Ireland from British rule to home rule, even as it establishes the political and moral necessity of that transition. Rather, the ruins create a space in the

text where multiple historical trajectories and related ethical meaning collide, layer, and present themselves to a spectator—both within the story and outside of it. The layered histories and diverse meanings are not resolved within the text but rather set in motion—what Benjamin might describe as a dialectical process. The baroque effect brings together, rather than breaks apart, the long and already-fractured history of Ireland, Anglo-Ireland, and the Irish Free State. And that, perhaps, is Bowen’s real aim in this novel as in her later novels, such as *The House in Paris* (1935) and *The Heat of the Day* (1949): to establish spatial and historical links between people, events, and affective experiences of history even as the period of 1920-1945, roughly the time spanned by these novels, is characterized by disorientation as well as cultural, economic, and political upheaval.

Bowen’s awareness of political violence and its radiating path of destruction and fear emanates from the 1916 Irish Rebellion, according to Kelly Sullivan’s recent argument, when Bowen was living with her mother in England. Bowen learned about the destruction of lives and buildings indirectly through her father’s work as a lawyer in Dublin during that time, and through her retrospective understanding of history from 1916 forward as a time of national and global violence. Moreover, Sullivan argues that Bowen understands the 1916 events in Dublin as indexing and projecting into the future the general “conditions of both revolutionary Ireland and modern Europe” (“Elizabeth Bowen and 1916”). This indirect—what Victoria Glendinning has called “peripheral”—connection to the 1916 rebellion also organizes the narrative style of *The Last September* and its relationship to the civil war. Both at the center of conflict and yet also removed from direct involvement in the various reports of violence, the narrative arranges a

constellated perspective of the period, a perspective very much in line with Benjamin's own theory of baroque seeing.⁸⁴

In *The Last September*, Bowen and the narrative point of view look backwards at 1920 as another transformational moment in which the threat of violence undermines a domestic order. Bowen's Irish plot particularizes the complicated and layered histories of colonial-patriarchal agitations for national integrity, on one hand, or global control on the other, which manifested in total warfare during this interwar period. In this case, the internal struggle between Irish nationalists and British imperialists is considered from Bowen's own Anglo-Irish perspective, and inflected by her gendered subordination to masculine, patriarchal, and militant authority in either case. The fragmentary and ambivalent dynamics of baroque ruins—and the performative echo of these qualities in the textual style of the novel—help to disrupt the (classical) tendency to incorporate the history of Ireland, and Anglo-Ireland in particular, into a romantic narrative that seals off the past as both inaccessible and eternal.

Therefore, when Bowen remarks in her preface to the second American edition of *The Last September* that the reader “must be conscious of looking, backward,” at a time that “is over and done with” (*The Mulberry Tree* 124), I take this to describe a kind of historically-conscious presentism in line with that which Hugh Grady suggests is at work in Walter Benjamin's philosophy. Like Benjamin, Bowen is always concerned with *the now* in her writing, and yet in *The Last September* she uncharacteristically and

⁸⁴ See Glendinning's biography, *Elizabeth Bowen*, p. 45. For Benjamin's discussion of constellation and a Baroque configuration of ideas and phenomena, see his “Epistemo-Critical Prologue” to *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, pp. 32-34. Like Benjamin's sense of the philosopher's perspective of history, Bowen's text “includes and absorbs the empirical world” but its narrative perspective “occupies an elevated position” (32). The feminist baroque reader must witness both the phenomena and ideas of the Irish war—including the violence that links them—in their constellated form.

deliberately sets the perspective *looking backward*.⁸⁵ Her comments in her preface call attention to this decision, helping to establish the reading experience itself as like encountering a ruin. Bowen, like Benjamin, wishes the reader to recognize the “now-time” of their own historical moment as they navigate the past through the text-as-ruin.⁸⁶ Bowen goes on to describe to the American audience of this later edition of her novel the “distraught and tense” “atmosphere” of the period explored in the novel (125). Amid “the roving armed conflict between the Irish Republican Army and British forces,” Anglo-Irish landowners “carr[ied] on [an] orthodox conventional social life,” which reflected the “ambiguous” role they played in the “heart-breaking” conflict (125). Bowen explains that the Anglo-Irish were “pulled” in opposing directions due to “loyalty” to Britain on one hand, and “their own temperamental Irishness” on the other. This ambivalent dynamic is reflected in the narrative discourse, and it is also figured in the dialectical function of the baroque ruin.

Grady describes Benjamin’s critical presentism as a rejection of “facile parallels between past and present and [a wish] to avoid [any] attempt to isolate the past from the present. What he calls for is a kind of creative violence [...], a simultaneous, interpenetrating moment of perception in which past and present reveal each other in each other” (7). Baroque aesthetics, according to Benjamin’s own definitions, facilitate such an “interpenetrating moment of perception,” and this novel makes use of the ruin to

85 Allan Hepburn writes in his introduction to *People, Places, Things: Essays by Elizabeth Bowen*: “All of her non-fiction registers the immediacy of particular places, which she calls their ‘climate.’ Bowen invariably conceives of the present moment as historical in its implications. By imperceptible degrees, historical events alter the climate of place in so far as those events are lived out and lived through” (2).

86 The term “now-time” comes from Benjamin’s discussion of history in “On the Concept of History” (1940): “History is the subject of a construction whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled full by now-time” (qtd. in Grady 7).

facilitate that aesthetic effect. Furthermore, the Anglo-Irish code of hospitality performs as ruin at the level of the discourse, mediating between a colonial past (that is still present) and a cosmopolitan and postcolonial future (which may never escape its colonial past). In this way, Bowen identifies a link between the two (past and future) while also positioning the reader to recognize the traditional (and colonial) discourse of “hospitality” as a ruin, as an imperfect form. Bowen’s late modernist experiment in *The Last September*, then, calls attention to modernism’s ambiguous mediating role between colonialism and cosmopolitanism, or between an inwardly-directed form of control of land and culture and an outwardly-directed expansion or dilution of identity.

While new modernist studies’ reassessments of the relationship of modernism to cosmopolitanism have often emphasized the “radical” potential of cosmopolitanism (Berman), or the “critical” practice inherent in cosmopolitanism’s modernist forms (Walkowitz), Bowen’s novel reminds us that the colonial context of cosmopolitanism always already produces a gap between the ideal and experienced forms of modernity, what Jacques Derrida has called the aporia of hospitality. In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida argues that a “non-dialectizable antinomy” between the ideal and practiced forms of hospitality undermines the Kantian vision of a cosmopolitan modernity (77). Kant’s definitions of hospitality and cosmopolitanism negotiate with Europe’s global expansion and the development of a colonality that had already transformed the terms of hospitality, however, and disturbed a balance of power between a “host” and a “guest,” the ostensible structure of hospitality that should mediate any encounter of strangers in a domestic space.⁸⁷ Bowen’s use of the ruin—both as motif and as a discourse—calls

87 In Western philosophical and political traditions, hospitality is entwined with cosmopolitanism through Immanuel Kant’s writings, especially his 1795 essay *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, which lays

attention to the failure of the form (hospitality) to mitigate an ethical dilemma of inequality and suspended hostility. The dilemma, in other words, of a cosmopolitan-trajectory for European-modernity.

The code of “hospitality” is a key concept for considering the Anglo-Irish position in Ireland, for approaching the colonial relationships staged in the Irish Big House tradition, and, I argue, it also figures the discourse of *The Last September*. Maria DiBattista has argued that Anglo-Irish hospitality not only helps to shape the narrative—for example, the sub-titled narrative sections stage “arrival,” “visit,” and “departure” of guests at the Big House—but also marks one of the “double allegiances” which complicate Irish modernism (228). Where DiBattista sees Bowen wrangling with the tradition of hospitality, on one side, and modernist aesthetics and social upheaval, on the other, as oppositional forces, I suggest that “hospitality” is a mediating structure of communication not only between characters but at the level of narrative aesthetic. In her rendering of this structure, Bowen reveals the ethical failures of the discourse that arranges and sustains colonial *and* cosmopolitan relationships, exposing the enabling link between hospitality and cosmopolitan modernism or a postcolonial future, rather than a conflicting tension between them. Bowen’s “spatial images,” as Sian White has termed them, organizes time and space in an alternative model to the teleological one that the idealism of cosmopolitan modernism suggests (“Spatial Politics” 30). The form of the ruin, especially as Benjamin theorized it in baroque terms, is just such a spatial image

out what many deem the foundation of modern liberalism. In simplified terms, hospitality—in a conditional form that acknowledges not only the “rights” of a visitor to safety but also the “rights” of a host to impose limits to the duration of the visit as well as to the nature of the visit—becomes the universalizing code through which a cosmopolitan modernity negotiates and flourishes. Embedded within the Kantian cosmopolitan hospitality, however, is the ethical dilemma of inevitable and continuous negotiation of hostility: a suspended and potential hostility both expected of the visitor (who may exceed the conditions of welcome) and threatened by the host (who may retract the offer of welcome).

that “stage[s] the relationships and tensions” of Ireland’s particular, unfinished, history in Bowen’s text (White “Spatial Politics” 30).

I argue that Bowen’s 1929 narrative reconstructs the precarity, even the impossibility, of intimacy in a colonial context as inherent to its organizing discourses. Furthermore, *The Last September* indicts the idealist version of cosmopolitan modernism as a discourse—that seeming “break” from both nationalist and imperialist traditions. In Bowen’s depiction of Ireland’s past and future in the form of a ruin, idealism like hospitality or cosmopolitan modernity is re-seen as a facilitating *medium of coloniality*.⁸⁸ Bowen’s text appropriates the simultaneously deconstructive and accretive nature of baroque aesthetics to expose hospitality, and the cosmopolitanism which it facilitates, as the goo in which coloniality persists as an uneven and *inhospitable* structure, even in the midst of revolutions, or beyond into postcolonial horizons. Specifically, Bowen’s discursive and thematic representations of “unintimacy” lay bare the *undialectizable* center of the Anglo-Irish colonial relationship (Bowen, *The Last September* 87).

A Colonial Un-encounter and Vying Narratives for Ireland

The setting for *The Last September*—an Anglo-Irish Big House in county Cork, geographically and socially isolated from the metropolitan centers of both Ireland and England—hardly seems to fit into traditional discourses of modernist cosmopolitanism.

⁸⁸ This sense of cosmopolitan modernity being another form of coloniality is influenced by Walter Dignolo’s argument that “coloniality is constitutive of modernity” (xiii). See also J.K. Gani’s discussion of cosmopolitanism and the “Illusion of Kantian Hospitality.” The narrative’s implicit critique of a kind of cosmopolitan modernism is likely influenced by Bowen’s own conservative and land-owning allegiances, yet this critique also aligns with a suspicion of internationalist interwar institutions like the League of Nations as an evolution of imperialism rather than an alternative, as noted in this dissertation’s Introduction. Even if Bowen’s ambivalence towards modernist change and cosmopolitan internationalism derives at least partly from her conservatism, the ambivalence of the text lends itself to multiple readings. The significance of Lois’s gendered vulnerability to patriarchal national/imperial plots is the central concern in this reading.

Yet it is the unexpected ways that both the concerns and effects of modernist cosmopolitanism infect the narrative which make exploring the text in these terms productive. As I have already suggested, it is the novel's presentation of a colonial contact zone via the Irish Big House and its surrounding property which concentrates a critical gaze on "hospitality" as an underlying myth of Enlightenment modernity.⁸⁹ In this way, the text explores not the tactical negotiations of individuals living in a modern city but the vying narratives which would surround those cities and construct the pasts and futures promised to those individuals, whether romantic and nationalist, classical and imperialist, or modernist and cosmopolitan. Bowen places at the center of those vying narratives Lois Farquar, a nineteen-year-old orphan at an in-between moment in life, somewhere between school and adulthood, between girl and woman, whose pivotal position in her own life stands in for the pivotal moment in Ireland's history. While Lois may not negotiate the economic and cultural realities of a congested city, she does negotiate contesting visions of Ireland as well as the prescriptions for her own role in that contest of strategies. Lois is therefore a kind of "surplus woman," as described in this dissertation's Introduction. In the Irish context, her potential as future vessel for patriarchal consolidation of power is stretched between two possibilities: Irish nationalism or British empire.

One of the most poignant moments in the narrative comes when Lois's function as *potential*—as emerging social and sexual subject—is emphasized in a near-encounter with an Irish rebel on the Naylor's demesne. Walking out on her own, defiantly, after the others go in for the night, Lois wanders along the same path that she had earlier danced

⁸⁹ I borrow the term "contact zone" from Mary Louise Pratt (1991).

on a dare with Gerald Lesworth, a British captain garrisoned nearby. The path leads into the woods circling Danielstown which, in the context of the Irish Troubles, represents contested space between the Anglo-Irish Big House and the Irish landscape. The pathway into the laurels and other shrubbery begins to take on more significance for Lois and the indirect narrator as both traverse it, evoking Lois's dead mother, Laura, and Lois's own precarious subjectivity.⁹⁰ "Laurels breathed coldly and close" to Lois, which triggers thoughts of her mother and a sense of fear:

Her fear of shrubberies tugged at its chain, fear behind reason, fear before her birth; fear like the earliest germ of her life that had stirred in Laura. She went forward eagerly, daring a snap of the chain, singing, with a hand to the thump of her heart: dramatic with terror. She thought of herself as forcing a pass. (41)

The "chain" is ambiguous in the passage, referring either to the darkness of the shrubbery which puts up a resistance to Lois, or perhaps refers to the fear itself, which is described as an almost tangible force reaching back into and beyond Lois's own life force, perhaps even the same thing as Lois's life force, which she now seems willing to "snap." In imagining herself "forcing a pass," Lois combines the physical act of walking through the demesne woods with the metaphorical work of confronting her own history, work that she fears she may not have enough courage for: "In her life—deprived as she saw it—there was no occasion for courage, which like an unused muscle slackened and slept" (41). It is not surprising, then that she thinks of the others, "sealed up in lamplight, secure," within the walls of the Big House (41).

This image of the rest of her Anglo-Irish clan, sealed up "like flowers in a paperweight" inside Danielstown, has a pulling effect on Lois's courage to proceed, a

⁹⁰ Bennett and Royle (1994) argue that the path of laurels becomes the "path of Laura" which not only "haunts" Lois but "invades" her sense of self (17).

counter-weight that draws Lois's sympathies back towards the house: thus, the feelings of being safely preserved along with her family "were desirable sharply, worth coming out to regain" (42). The house and the woods surrounding it are at odds with each other, each vying for possession of Lois: "Now, on the path: grey patches worse than the dark [. . .] slipped up her dress knee-high" (42). While the house projects a sense of "secure and bright" stasis and preservation, the woods offer darkness and shadows, and fear of ghosts from the past—or perhaps from a developing future. And yet Lois seems attracted to the "dramatic" "terror" she experiences in the woods, invigorated and spurred to pursue the laurels even as they "deserted her groping arm" (42). The dark unknown of the woods beckons from beyond the illuminated interiors of the Big House, and the competing forces of Ireland/Big House are literalized in Lois's arrival at a spot "where two paths crossed" (42).

It is at this crossroads that the intimations of vying forces transform into countering narratives, narratives that seem to be vying not only for Lois, but for Ireland.⁹¹ Upon reaching the crossroads, Lois senses a change in the atmosphere, which she first believes portends the coming of a "ghost." That she first thinks this ghost is emerging from the "horror" she senses, and that this fear, and therefore the ghost, emanate from "within her" extends her previous conflating of the woods with her own history, and of the laurels with her mother, revealing her deeply-felt sense of *wrongness* at the root of her family's perch on Irish grounds—a sense that reflects Bowen's own historical regret,

⁹¹ Here is where it seems clear that Bowen is drawing on the nationalist myths romanticized in the Irish Literary Revival, such as those of Cuchulann and Cathleen ni Houlihan (see Keown 2011), yet in appropriating them to represent Lois's Anglo-Irish position, and considering Lois's romantic and narrative failures in this text, Bowen denaturalizes the link between Irish myth and nationalist politics while also undermining their patriarchal coding of women as pathway to a masculine, Irish national future.

articulated in the afterword to *Bowen's Court*. There she writes: "my family got their position and drew their power from a situation that shows an inherent wrong" (453). And yet that sense of fear or horror Lois encounters in the woods is not articulated as guilt or even awareness, but remains a feeling before the point of thought, prevented from forming as such because of the house and its "carpet-border," from which Lois's "Fear curled back in defeat" (42).

Edwina Keown suggests that in Bowen's reworking of the Anglo-Irish Gothic tradition into the tense atmosphere that pervades this novel about the Irish War of Independence, "The terror outside, originally associated with Catholicism, is now identified as the horror within the Anglo-Irish themselves" (137). Bowen's later admission of "wrongness" in *Bowen's Court*, however, directly associates Lois's affective response to the woods in this scene with her own family's Anglo-Irish historical position in Ireland and particularizes Bowen's reculturation of the Baroque in terms of Ireland's own ongoing disputes between Catholicism and Protestantism as land-grabs and contests for political control. Again, Lois is marked out by the text as potential and pivotal here: excluded from her Anglo-Irish clan who are frozen "like flowers in a paper-weight" in their big house, and also excluded by the woods which resist, taunt, and frighten her. Her ambiguous position emphasizes the text's dialectical pull between domestic preservation (via the paperweight image) and external threat (via the menacing woods).

When thought does form in this scene, it is associated with the figure that emerges from the woods along the path crossing hers. The "resolute profile powerful as a thought" is assumed to be an Irish rebel who "pass[es] within reach of her" as Lois remains

invisible in the shadows, “blotted out in the black” (42). The rebel comes with “steps smooth on the smooth earth” and never materializes for Lois as more than a “trench-coat,” more heard than seen (42).⁹² Lois desires to “make some contact,” however, because she acutely feels a fear of being left out of intimacy; and intimacy, in the form of personal recognition, also means life to Lois: “not to be known of seemed like a doom of extinction” (42). Lois’s fear of extinction brings to a gothic register the Burkean lament of failed “love”—hegemony—between the settler class and the Irish.⁹³

Importantly, the three options Lois considers for opening communication with the passing trench-coat represent three different political strategies available to her Anglo-Irish clan. First, she considers remarking on the weather (“It’s a fine night”), then she thinks “to engage his sympathies: ‘Up Dublin!’”; and thirdly she remembers, “since it was in her uncle’s demesne,” she might challenge the approaching figure: “‘What do you want?’” (42). The first option stands in for the famous “hospitality” of the Anglo-Irish who welcome the Irish on their plantations to live and work, as well as the British soldiers to play tennis and have tea, and therefore this option symbolizes a neutral zone of non-contact, which would defeat her purpose of initiating intimacy. The second suggests siding with the Irish in their war for independence from British rule, while the third withdraws that support in favor of upholding colonial occupation and legal authority.

⁹² The detail of the “trench-coat” signals that this figure is an IRA gunman, as it was considered both practical and symbolic gear for rebels (Foster). Interestingly, later in the novel, the British soldier and love interest for Lois, Gerald, similarly appears metonymically as a “trench-coat” emerging from the woods surrounding Danielstown, which I will comment on later in this essay.

⁹³ Edmund Burke, the eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish statesman and political theorist, advocated “natural” structures of sovereignty and social control, otherwise described as bonds of “love” for a God, king, or father. Terry Eagleton identifies this political philosophy of Burke’s as hegemonic (36-39), and its patriarchal structure is self-evident.

In the end, however, Lois remains silent: “she let him go past in contemptuous unawareness” (42). Bowen’s repeated use of the “un” prefix to describe both affective and political failures of recognition and intimacy—here with the word “unawareness”—inscribes Derrida’s aporia of hospitality into the narrative discourse. Furthermore, Lois is both excluded and silenced in the confrontation between nationalist and colonialist perspectives in this un-encounter. Her inchoate political subjectivity is stifled by conflicting allegiances and desires while her footpath between rebel and big house, between past and future, literally and figuratively demonstrates a dead end for her, as it did for her mother.

In *Bowen’s Court*, Bowen describes the Anglo-Irish “tragedy” in terms of their “unawareness” that Ireland did not accept them: “it is in that unawareness of final rejection, unawareness of being looked out at from some secretive, opposed life, that the Anglo-Irish naïve dignity and, even, tragedy, seems to me to stand” (qtd. in Lee 43). It is significant that in *The Last September*, the earlier, fictionalized version of Bowen’s *Court*, Bowen suggests that it is the Anglo-Irish Lois who “looked out . . . from some secretive” spot, and it is, rather, the IRA rebel who remains unaware. The reversal of positions in this scene emphasizes an emerging identity for Lois, a self-consciousness of subject formation which allows Lois to see her position in relation to the other. It further underscores the difference between Lois and the other Danielstown inhabitants who remain sealed off from even the potential of encounter. At the same time, however, the text suggests that the Irish nationalist shares something of the Anglo-Irish’s blindness, therefore blurring the means and effects of the oppositional political forces, and positioning Lois as a witness between them.

The un-encounter remains in its potential or unachieved state, which allows the narrative to register the effect of the man on the woods: “The crowd of trees straining up from the passive disputed earth, each sucking up and exhaling the country’s essence—swallowed him finally” (43). Where Lois could not penetrate, the rebel has, and the woods and rebel join in an intimacy described as swallowing, when the “disputed” ground is “passive” to his crossing it. The man’s progress along the path “burnt on the dark an almost visible trail,” engraving his political “intentness” into the ground for Lois to read (42-3). Yet Lois is tentative in her reading, wondering whether the man “might have been a murderer,” or perhaps just after the guns rumored to be buried nearby (even though the two possibilities might not be exclusive of each other) (43). Lois decides—quite passively—that “what it amounted to” was merely that “A man in a trench-coat had gone on without seeing her” (43).

Lois is therefore unsuccessful in not only her initial desire to make contact with the passing figure, but also in the opportunity to read the narrative the man and woods seem to construct together: a narrative of violent resistance. This failure is emphasized in her subsequent inability to relate the events to the others back in the big house:

But as Lois went up the steps breathlessly her adventure began to diminish. It held ground for a moment as she saw the rug dropped in the hall by Mrs. Montmorency sprawl like a body across the polish. Then confidence disappeared in a waver of shadow among the furniture. Conceivably she had surprised life at a significant angle in the shrubbery. But it was impossible to speak of this. At a touch from Aunt Myra adventure became literary, to Uncle Richard it suggested an inconvenience; a glance from Mr. Montmorency or Laurence would make her encounter sterile. (43)

While the house and woods vied over possession of Lois, here the stakes are narrative itself. If the woods conspired with the rebel to write a narrative of resistance to British rule, here the house—and its inhabitants—conspire to dissolve or overwrite that

narrative. While the suggestion of colonial violence in the image of the rug that “sprawl[s] like a body across the polish” at first sustains Lois’s grasp of the rebel’s narrative, it is a grasp quickly loosened by the mere presence of the house’s furniture and the imperial legacy it conveys. The furniture represents the architecture of hospitality, overcoming the momentary disruption of the Big House’s domestic space symbolized in the rolled-up rug, out of place. However, the indirect narrator explains that even if she had been able to communicate what she saw in the woods to the others, the older generation would appropriate the narrative and undermine it as “an inconvenience,” while the sterility of Laurence and Hugo would dissolve its capacity for any actionable results. In effect, a hospitality code prevents the possibility of resistance at both domestic and narrative levels.

Perhaps more significant is the indirect narrator’s final concession to the Big House and its inhabitants, which underscores this narrative impossibility: “what seemed most probable was that they would not listen . . .” (43, original ellipses). The ultimate defeat of the rebel’s narrative is that it would not penetrate beyond the illusion of civil discourse. The ellipses in this case, however, create a (narrative) space for this potential. While Lois can only go up to bed “uncivilly, without saying good night to anyone” (44)—a slight rebellion against the house’s code, at least—the reader is signaled [invited?] in those three dots to reflect on the potential for resistance available within a different kind of narrative practice. The elliptical moment in Bowen’s text facilitates not only the reader’s contemplation but, importantly, the reader’s *participation* at a key moment when multiple narratives contend for control. In other words, the elliptical moment—here and throughout the text—creates an “interpenetrating moment of

perception” for the reader to recognize their own positionality, even responsibility, in relation to the text itself. The three dots fray and weaken the otherwise inhibiting hospitality code, echoing on a textual level the Naylor’s imperfect but “carefully stretched” netting which fails to stop tennis balls from escaping into the bushes at their summer tennis-and-tea parties, a subtle disruption of the Big House’s performance of hospitality (54). In other words, Bowen’s performative text hints at the faulty construction of hospitality as an imperial strategy in the first place.

Ruins and Recognition: Failure of the Colonial Relationship

Another kind of crossroads moment—a colonial encounter that serves to reveal the constructedness of the narrative process itself, as well as the layered history of Anglo-Ireland—occurs later in the narrative when Lois joins other Danielstown visitors, Marda and Hugo, on a walk through the valley on the Danielstown property where they encounter another IRA gunman (perhaps the same “trench-coat” Lois witnesses earlier). The three characters come upon a ruined mill which stimulates the romantic, gothic imagination of Lois, and stirs the Anglo-Irish resentment of British constraint for Hugo:

The mill startled them all, staring light-eyed, ghoulishly, round a bend in the valley. Lois had to come hurrying up to explain how it frightened her. In fact she wouldn’t for worlds go into it but liked going as near as she dared. It was a fear she didn’t want to get over, a kind of deliciousness. These dead mills—the country was full of them, never quite stripped and whitened to skeleton’s decency: like corpses at their most horrible. “Another,” Hugo declared, “of our national grievances. English law strangled the—” But Lois insisted on hurrying: she and Marda were now well ahead. (178)

As before, Lois is attracted to the “fear” she feels in close proximity to the ghosts of Anglo-Irish colonial violence, here represented by a remnant of Anglo-Ireland’s plantocratic past. The mill’s zombie state (“like corpses at their most horrible”) resists the “decency” of bleached erasure and rather embodies the horrors of labor and

environmental exploitation. That the mill shows “not the decline of meanness, simply decline” signals the *baroque allegorical*—rather than romantic or symbolic—function of this ruin in the text (179). The reveries and distractions of the three Danielstown representatives may deflect or displace the discomfort of what Neil Corcoran identifies as a “kind of ‘political unconscious,’” but the text’s baroque performativity emphasizes, rather than suppresses, a tension (327). Hugo’s unfinished sentence is an example of the text’s performative discourse: Hugo’s unfinished political opinion—an opinion that reflects an Anglo-Irish settler colonial resentment of the metropole’s persistent intervention in Ireland’s legal and economic systems—is typographically choked off with a dash and therefore demonstrative of the colonial-metropole relationship. The Anglo-Irish discursive position is as precarious as their political and economic position in Ireland.

That the mill evokes past injustice and enduring “meanness” while at the same time “the scene seemed strangely set for a Watteau interlude” suggests, again, conflicting narratives running across the landscape, yet both of these represent the political unconscious of the Anglo-Irish in 1920 (179). Bowen’s allusion to the “Watteau interlude” refers to Jean-Antoine Watteau, a French painter of the early eighteenth century known for his continuation of the Baroque style. His celebration of aristocracy is memorialized in his *fetes galantes*, bucolic scenes of the leisured class in lush landscapes that include classical themes of love and reverie, complete with embedded statues of Venus and cupid figures with arrows. As the aristocracy is a dying class in France in the eighteenth century—soon to be extinguished by the Revolution—the pale, extravagantly-

draped figures in his paintings take on a quality of ruins themselves, via critical retrospection.

Bowen's allusion therefore functions as a *mise en abyme*, a pattern within a pattern. We already saw this kind of baroque aesthetic effect in Woolf's feminist baroque narrative—there, it repeated an interpenetrating effect of audiences, performances, and obscured violence that drew attention to the pattern, inviting the reader to interrupt it. In Bowen's text, the allusion to a Baroque artist and his political context produces a subtle yet self-reflexive aesthetic effect regarding the relationship of class to revolution. It also signals a reversion to nostalgic forms that *unsuccessfully* prevent change—a metafictional critique of Anglo-Irish tradition and hospitality in the face of a wave of revolutionary change transforming not only Ireland, but Europe and the face of the globe. Importantly, the combination of imagery in this scene—from the “corpses” to the “Watteau interlude”—construct a horror/nostalgia dichotomy that the Anglo-Irish characters, along with the indirect narrator, project onto the landscape and onto the narrative in order to obscure the colonial legacy (as well as their proximity to revolution) that is inscribed in the ruined architecture of the mill.

What happens inside the mill, however, where Marda lures Lois to “hide from Mr. Montmorency” (179), disrupts the Anglo-Irish limitation of perspective on the mill's narrative significance and therefore expands narrative possibility. As the two women tentatively explore the mill's dark interior, they stumble upon a sleeping man. Awakened by their noise, he sleepily aims a gun at them and, after asking them questions and being told by Lois that they were “just out for a walk,” he declares: “It is time [. . .] that yourselves gave up walking. If yez have nothing better to do, yez had better keep within

the house while y’have it” (181). The statement rebukes their class’s presence as merely limited to leisure—a sentiment that also critiques the “Watteau interlude” embedded in the narrative perspective of the ruined mill and in the pseudo love triangle of Hugo, Marda, and Lois. While a *romantic* function of the ruin for the Anglo-Irish and the narrative would have created “an encounter with the historical as a leisure pursuit—while articulating the absence of history” (Thomas 185), Bowen’s *baroque* text accomplishes something very different. In a kind of shattering of the romantic atmosphere projected onto the mill, the rebel’s speech from inside the ruin exposes Ascendancy style as useless (“If yez have nothing better to do”), as both constructed by and restricted to the Big House (“keep within the house”), and as temporary (“while y’have it”).

Critical consideration of this scene has tended to focus on the homoerotic tension between Marda and Lois, and on the intimations of sexual violence and desire in the descriptions of the rebel’s gun and Marda’s bloody hands and lips, which Hugo fixates on as the women re-emerge from the ruin after a shot is heard.⁹⁴ I will return to the significance of homoeroticism and sexual violence for this dissertation’s argument about forms of colonial-patriarchal intimacies and alternatives. However, I will first draw attention to something generally overlooked: the Irish rebel’s appropriation of the mill for his own purpose of colonial resistance. His appropriation reveals an alternative to the horror/nostalgia function of the ruin’s presence on the Anglo-Irish landscape. In her introduction to the recent collection, *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination*, Ann Laura Stoler argues that colonial ruins not only mark “a defunct regime” but also “attend to their reappropriations, neglect, and strategic and active positioning within the politics

⁹⁴ See, for example, Maud Ellman, *Elizabeth Bowen*, p. 65; Jed Esty, “Virgins of Empire,” p. 266; renée hoogland p. 82.

of the present” (11). Significantly, the rebel’s first command to the women is “Stay there” (181), which would seem ironically at odds with his greater cause to rid Ireland of British presence. Like a ruin’s capacity to ground a spectator in the *nowness* of a historical process, however, the command effectively challenges the Anglo-Irish tendency to transcend space and time in their construction of euphemistic, neutral narratives to describe their position in Ireland.

This Anglo-Irish tendency is memorably figured in Lois’s confused sense of geography and nationality, an impossible mental map the indirect narrator describes when Lois considers the very different national self-conceptions between herself and the “trench-coat” she observes in the woods in the earlier scene: “She could not conceive of her country emotionally: it was a way of living, abstract of several countrysides, or an oblique, frayed island moored at the north but with an air of being detached and drawn out west from the British coast” (42). The Ascendancy style collapses space and time, projecting an idea of Britishness itself as solid, and thus re-spatializing the colonial landscape. Lois’s mental map also figures a spatial collapse that reflects the Anglo-Irish ambivalent construction of “home”: neither clearly Ireland nor Britain.

At the same time, the horror/nostalgia dichotomy of the Anglo-Irish gothic projection of “history” onto the Irish landscape serves to distract from the reality of their own wrongful presence and their ultimate superfluity to the landscape. In the simple statement “Stay there,” the rebel pushes the women to recognize a “here” and “now” in which they participate and bear responsibility for their actions. In other words, the “biographical historicity of the individual” is invoked by the rebel’s speech, made more concrete by the colonial ruins the rebel now uses as shelter. Lois is immediately and

profoundly affected by the rebel's statements: "Lois could not but agree with him. She felt quite ruled out, there was nothing at all for her here. She had better be going" (181-2). The rebel's command to "Stay there," then—along with the exposure of her class's superfluity—has the impact on Lois of revealing to her that "She had better be going."

For Lois, however, a young, orphaned woman of the declining Ascendancy, options for existence are limited. Pushed against this wall of subjectivity in which she recognizes her personal and familial role in the rebel's patriotic-nationalist fight, she also suddenly recognizes her own vulnerability to the imperial-patriarchal superstructure, emphasized by her current *lack* of legitimate familial affiliation (absent father; no husband). Lois therefore thinks to herself, "I must marry Gerald" (182). This repeats a thought she has earlier in the narrative when she brings her drawings to Marda for her consideration—another attempt at negotiating an intimacy—and learns that Marda is engaged to the English stockbroker, Leslie Lawe.

The link between the mill scene and the earlier scene in Marda's room therefore reinforces the alternative potential of love between Marda and Lois, as both scenes offer private moments in which Lois forgets her patriarchal and reproductive duty and imagines a different future of companionship or love negotiated on her own terms. In the earlier scene in Marda's room, for example, after she learns that Marda is engaged, Lois fantasizes about travelling "abroad," a horizon so far closed to her "because of the War" (142). Importantly, Lois wants to "stay in a hotel by herself" and "to see backgrounds without bits taken out of them by Holy Families" and to visit "unmarried sorts of places" (142-43).⁹⁵ Both Marda and the ruined mill excite in Lois a sense of queer history, a

⁹⁵ Elizabeth Cullingsford has considered Lois's preference for a "solitary and non-productive future" in terms of Bowen's construction of a "gendered onliness" in her early fiction (300).

relationship to both past and future that is not restricted by reproductive and domestic order. Like Woolf's Isa Oliver who is tethered to Pointz Hall and the English countryside by her duty to "continue the line," however, Lois is yanked back into a colonial-patriarchal plot in each of these scenes by the memory that she "must marry Gerald."

The mill scene and the scene in Marda's room is also connected via Lois's imagination of ruined forms. Contemplating the news that Marda is engaged with a sense of rejection, Lois imagines Marda will eventually forget her and this brief, shared moment in Marda's room in Danielstown. In a moment that seems to parallel the encounter with the ruined mill while foreshadowing the novel's ending, Lois

hoped that instead of bleaching to dust in summers of empty sunshine, the carpet would burn with the house in a scarlet night to make one flaming call upon Marda's memory. Lois again realized that no one had come for her, after all. She thought: "I must marry Gerald." (141)

The detail of the rug "bleaching to dust" links this moment to the description of the mill which, on the other hand, is "never quite stripped and whitened," and therefore stands to remind Hugo, Marda, and Lois of an unspeakable past which ironically, in its ruined state, represents their future. Lois's reflection in Marda's room is further linked with the mill scene in Lois's realization that she is alone, quite detached from any recognizable or accepted "pattern" of relations (142), and therefore she decides that she "must marry Gerald."

Marriage is the first answer, in both cases, to Lois's predicament of unbelonging, a consequence of her identity as orphan and as Anglo-Irish, which is made more precarious by being a woman. This compounding of *unintimacy*—her sense of lacking forms of intimacy which can sustain and ground her in the midst of a dissolving Anglo-Irish identity—triggers Lois's feeling of the "doom of extinction" (42). For Lois,

however, there is no escape from a totalizing colonial-patriarchal system which demands normative familial affiliation for survival. And, importantly, these forms are routed through the symbol of the house, for Lois feels claimed by either Danielstown or wherever Gerald's British regiment would post him. The ruined mill—and the future ruined Danielstown—therefore have ambiguous potential in the narrative. They represent decay as well as a tradition of domestic and colonial control, but in their *ruined* forms they also represent possible escape, for both the rebel and Lois.

The correspondences between the earlier scene in Marda's room and the ruined mill scene further demonstrate the baroque allegorical animus of the narrative. In Benjamin's theorizing of baroque allegory in terms of a dialectical image, "historical understanding" is facilitated because "chronological movement is grasped and analysed in a spatial image" (92). This is translated to the narrative structure of the novel when the encounter in the ruined mill might trigger an echo in the reader's mind, just as the text echoes the words "must marry Gerald" from the earlier scene in the bedroom. The repetition within a progressing narrative consolidates an idea while also illuminating differences for the reader. The layering of scenes, of conflagration, of ruin, of Lois requiring but not achieving patriarchal security, foreshadows not only the coming ruination of Danielstown but also prepares the reader for an analysis of meaning for that ultimate conflagration and ruin. The repetition of ruins, which both represent and *interrupt* the experience of history (for characters and reader) reveals not only colonial history but the patriarchal superstructure which leaves no place for Lois.

Even though Lois is profoundly affected by the rebel's statements such that she begins to mentally organize a departure from Danielstown and an escape from the unfair

and uneven patterns exposed to her in the figure of the rebel pointing a gun at her, the other Anglo-Irish characters continue to weave narratives that maintain their neutral positions by erasing the rebel's narrative. When Hugo runs into the opening of the mill to see whether Marda and Lois are all right after hearing a gunshot, Marda and Lois block his way and reassure him that the blood on Marda's hand is not to be taken seriously: "'Just a pistol went off—you heard?—by accident. I seem to have lost some pieces of skin'" (183). As many critics have noted, the circumstances for the gunshot and Marda's injury are never directly narrated, and like the unnarrativized gunshot, the scene itself becomes a kind of void or vanishing point in the text—another baroque aesthetic potential—crisscrossed and shaped by competing narratives for what the mill and the event might signify.

The crisscrossing of narratives performs, again, a narrative under dispute: as in Lois's earlier encounter with an IRA rebel in the woods, along with her failed attempt to recount it, conflicting narratives seem to clash and contradict each other as they struggle for control over what might remain. In this way, the discursive and thematic work of Bowen's text echoes not only the political struggle in Ireland in 1920, but the wider struggles and political jockeying between nations and nations, empires and empires, and between clashing factions within these unstable sovereignties. At the level of dialogue, Hugo reacts to the threatening gunshot and the evocative image of Marda's blood by rewriting the unseen event to target Lois for culpability. He goes so far as to suggest that *Lois* should be shot, thereby redirecting the agency and violence of the scene towards what he considers to be his immediate threat: Lois and her ambiguous reproductive-

sexual potential.⁹⁶ Marda, for her part, extinguishes the threat by offering euphemisms and diffuses the incident so that it might be an extension of her own clumsiness, famous at Danielstown for her childhood accident of cutting her knee on slate: “being me, it was bound to happen” (184). In both cases, the rebel’s revolutionary statement is suppressed.

Lois, on the other hand, enthusiastically suggests a conspiracy of silence which doesn’t exactly retain the rebel’s revolutionary narrative but honors his contribution to the dramatic scene by emphasizing the need to preserve his anonymity: “There never was anybody, we never saw anybody, *you* never heard—” (184, original emphasis). Lois attempts to forge a new kind of intimacy that would *negotiate a relationship* between the three Anglo-Irish residents of the Big House *and* the IRA rebel. Like before, however, her own narrative attempts are thwarted: “But nobody listened” (184). Crucially, what is left ricocheting off the narrative is the rebel’s own words, in addition to his (assumed) gunshot. The rebel’s presence in the mill—like the trench-coat’s presence in the woods—introduces a submerged, yet fitfully emerging counter-narrative. While the Anglo-Irish perspective of the mill reads (projects) only their own plantocracy past and a doomed future, the Irish rebel sees the ruined mill as a stepping stone to Ireland’s republic future. Lois’s desire for a different kind of intimacy is poised between these two dominant narratives.

The dominant narratives, again, compete to *name* the architecture, and to name the consequences of the historical moment.⁹⁷ Matthew Brown similarly describes the

⁹⁶ Sullivan offers another reading of Hugo’s anxiety in this seen as reflecting Bowen’s own anxieties about social change, specifically “shifts in class” that the destruction of the colonial mill—and other forms of architectural destruction in this novel and her other texts—represents (“Elizabeth Bowen and 1916”).

⁹⁷ This project of naming and un-naming also recalls the discursive control of demographics and domestic order in Woolf’s *Between the Acts*.

narrative scramble over this near-climactic moment in the text: “The pistol’s threat [. . .] converts from an actual to a figurative menace, for the shot heard by Hugo, ostensibly witnessed by Lois and Marda, suggests that this chaotic event will achieve a lucid narrative direction, with all three *bidding for singular command* of cause and effect. *Each wants to name, and so to possess*, the story of the shot” (19, added emphasis). My reading of these narrative upheavals, however, includes the rebel’s revolutionary speech and emphasizes the emerging narrative of colonial resistance to the Anglo-Irish narrative practices of deflection and suppression. This is a moment in the text when the “actual” briefly aligns with the narrative’s minoritarian potential, when the sound of the gunshot frays the integrity of the romantic plot. Lois’s interjection here, true to her narrative and historical function as inchoate sexual subject, remains in the form of narrative *potential* and offers a recuperative, though not revolutionary, option.

In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin first laid out his arguments about the role of ruins to disrupt or shock a spectator into recognizing historical reality as well as his or her own positionality in relation to that history. Benjamin connects this baroque form—the ruin—to the aesthetic function of allegory. He will later expand and extend this theory of ruins to his musings on the “trash of history” and the accumulation of objects in his unfinished *Arcades Project*. In this mill scene, the ruin’s capacity is activated when the Irish rebel interrupts the romantic and politically detached musings of the Danielstown inhabitants. It is the rebel’s words—“Stay there”—and the reverberating gunshot that silences Hugo’s self-important and romantic musings, that breaks the romantic spell. The incongruity of the rebel’s persistence (to speak, to shoot) shifts the perspectives, even if only briefly, of the Danielstown inhabitants. Bowen’s text constructs

a theory not only about the capacity of the ruin itself, then, but importantly invests the power—the *responsibility*—of recognition and action into the *narrative process* itself, including the reader as participant in an ongoing engagement with history. When Lois has her near-encounter with the rebel in the woods in the earlier encounter, it is her inability to read and communicate that encounter to others which seems to diffuse its impact. In this climactic scene, it is not just the ruin but the speech and gunshot of the rebel which finally forces recognition of a colonial relationship: between the Danielstown occupants and the ruined mill, and between the Anglo-Irish and the man holding the gun. It is up to the subsequent narrativizing of that encounter to transform the moment into some action. These instances of narrative *failure* on the part of Lois, Hugo, and Marda set up the later narrative opportunity when the Naylor witnesses their Big House, Danielstown, in the process of becoming a ruin.

Though the Anglo-Irish characters evade narrative and political responsibility (in accordance with the tradition and aesthetic of ‘hospitality’) in the climactic scene at the ruined mill, the ruin’s role in effecting perspective shifts—of facilitating recognition—foreshadows the novel’s conclusion. In the last paragraphs of the novel, narrative temporality becomes distorted to offer a kaleidoscopic perspective of Danielstown: we see it in its last autumn of 1920, which is the primary setting of the novel’s story, but also in its fiery moment of “death” in February of 1921, and, briefly, we see it in its subsequent state of “ruin” in the following autumn of 1921 (302-303). The three visions of Danielstown are compressed and out of order—a baroque reorganization of time and space—reminding the reader of the backward-looking perspective of the narrative itself,

just as the novel's opening scene signals with the words "In those days" to emphasize a retrospective narrative perspective (3).

At the end of the text, the ruined Danielstown—or, more accurately, the land on which it stood—is described as a post-human testimony on the landscape. The text suddenly expands the distance between a narrative perspective and the Anglo-Irish characters in the story, shifting the free indirect discourse to reflect the perspective of the atmosphere and grounds around the ruin: "By next year light had possessed itself of the vacancy, still with surprise. [. . .] Leaves, fluttering down the slope with the wind's hesitation, banked formless, frightened, against the too clear form of the ruin" (302-3). Like a Woolfian perspectiveless interlude, the non-human forces of weather, light, and leaves register sentient subjectivity (surprise, hesitation, and fear) in relation to the ruined landscape. Irrespective of human witnesses, the ruined space is described as "too clear," a detail that begs the questions: too clear for whom or what? What, exactly, about the "form of the ruin" is "too clear"?

The sense of overwhelming clarity is better understood after the narrative goes on to describe how Danielstown came to be a ruin. The last description of Danielstown focuses on its "death—the execution, rather" (303). Maud Ellmann explains: "It is worth noting that, in previous Anglo-Irish novels, the term 'execution' had been used to mean the seizure of the property of bankrupt landowners, ruined not by revolution but by the costs of their man-eating estates" (42). Here, however, Bowen invests the term with *both* of its senses: the sense afforded by the gothic Big House tradition which exposes self-destructive greed and an excessive exploitation of resources by the Ascendancy class, but also the sense that the revolutionary violence of the IRA lends, which included

extrajudicial executions. Again, then, the discourse itself performs the incommensurable narratives of Ireland, not only extreme in their oppositional politics but also in their destructiveness. Bowen's own comment on the threat of the "dispossessed" in her post-WWII reflection on her former, now dismantled, family home in Ireland also incorporates these multiple meanings. The Irish were dispossessed of their land by the British; the Anglo-Irish were eventually dispossessed of their Big Houses.

The narrative is constructed around the empty space of the actual "execution" of Danielstown, however, conveying the news of violence in an indirect way that appropriates the domestic order of host and guest. In language that echoes the novel's opening scene when the Montmorencys arrive at Danielstown, and therefore ironically fulfilling the narrative arc of hospitality, the "iron gate twanged" behind the exiting vehicles of the rebels, leaving on the scene "a silence that was to be ultimate" (303). Rather than a direct view of flames, the text instead describes the lights in the sky from several burning houses on the same night. In a sardonic reference to Ascendancy style, that style which is invested in the code of hospitality and organizes the Anglo-Irish presence and their status as colonial middle-men between the British empire and the Irish agrarian and working classes, the front door of Danielstown "stood open hospitably upon a furnace" (303).

Crucially, however, the last lines of the novel describe the transformation of the Danielstown inhabitants from hosts into witnesses: "Sir Richard and Lady Naylor, not saying anything, did not look at each other, for in the light from the sky they saw too distinctly" (303). Again, the adverb "too" calls attention to itself and to a shock of recognition. It is the last of the Anglo-Irish clan to inhabit Danielstown who finally

recognize their own responsibility in the narrative of Ireland and the violent failures of the colonial relationship. This description of the Naylor's *not looking* and yet *seeing too clearly* also repeats the narrative's baroque configuration of "indirect clarity," one of the five principles of Baroque style according to Heinrich Wölfflin.⁹⁸ Bowen's comments in the preface to the American edition also become poignant in this case: just as the Naylor's come to see the violent consequences of their Anglo-Irish hospitality, the text itself enshrines the history of Anglo-Ireland in its discourse such that the reader might witness, again and indirectly, the truth of its "too clear" form. The use of the verb "too" in these final glimpses of Danielstown links the Naylor's vision to the indirect perspective on the empty landscape, and thus also draws the reader into this configuration of *seeing history* via baroque vision, and baroque ruins.

The Modernism of "Crossing-Arches"

I'll conclude by turning to one of the most overt clashes of incommensurable worldviews (or narratives) in the text. After a luncheon to which Gerald has invited himself in order to ingratiate himself with the Naylor's and press his bid to secure an engagement with Lois, Gerald and Laurence find themselves in conversation over their after-meal cigarettes. Laurence lures Gerald into talking about his military presence in Ireland, an opportunity for Gerald to define his English and imperial allegiances, and for Laurence to assert his utter lack of allegiances: "How is this war of yours really going? Do you realise I know nothing—this might all just as well be going on in the Balkans" (131). In making such a statement, Laurence attempts to establish himself as a modern cosmopolitan—someone unaligned with national interests—but in doing so, he not only

⁹⁸ See this dissertation's Introduction for the list Wölfflin's five baroque principles.

separates himself from English soldiers like Gerald who must carry the imperial flag, but he also separates himself from the Irish conflict more generally, a negation of both the British military strategy to control, and the Irish rebels' efforts to declare independence—a complete denial of Ireland as a contested space, not to mention a denial of his own “biographical historicity” in terms of it. When Gerald attempts to explain the conflict as an unfortunate consequence of the British burden of building and maintaining “civilisation,” Laurence muses to himself with satisfaction at having brought Gerald to the very idea he wanted to expose; for if Laurence is “not English,” as he proudly declares to a dumfounded Gerald, then he cannot be deluded about “civilisation” in the way he believes Gerald is (132-3).

In the often-discussed passage which follows this exchange, the indirect narrator traces the contrasting visions of nationality and civilization which Gerald and Laurence each project with complete faith in their respective infallibility:

Their conversation, torn off rough at this edge, seemed doomed from its very nature to incompleteness. Gerald would have wished to explain that no one could have a sounder respect than himself and his country for the whole principle of nationality, and that it was with some awareness of misdirection, even of paradox, that he was out here to hunt and shoot the Irish. His alertness was blunted, while he approached the ladies, by a slight stupor of effort, he was groping for something Napoleon had once said, something remarkably neat and apposite that Gerald had once copied into a pocket-book. Laurence had not hoped to explain, but had wished that Gerald could infer, that there was a contrariety in the notions they each had of this thing civilisation. As a rather perplexing system of niceties, Laurence saw it, an exact and delicate interrelation of stresses between being and being, like crossing arches, an unemotional kindness withering to assertion selfish or racial, silence cold with a comprehension in which the explaining clamour died away. He foresaw it the end of art, of desire, as it would be the end of battle, but it was to this end, this faceless but beautiful negation that he had lifted a glass inwardly while he had said, ‘Thank God’. (133-34).

I quote the passage at length because it is crucial in both content and style to the overall meaning of the text. As Siân White has demonstrated, this passage performs the

“unintimacy” aesthetic that undermines communication between characters and destabilizes the narrative contract between novel and reader (“An Aesthetics of Unintimacy” 87-88). The indirectness of narrative voice allows the incommensurate ideologies to share space, to nearly blend into each other even as they clash, though neither of these visions is actually spoken out loud by either character. On one hand, this unspoken-but-performed impasse is another example of the hospitality code which discursively organizes colonial relationships in Anglo-Irish territory—a weak suspension of hostility.

On another hand, the juxtaposition of visions reveals a critique of both imperial *and* cosmopolitan ideologies as destructive to a cultural center. Gerald’s respect for the “principle of nationality” is built on a “paradox” that requires him to destroy the national pride of the Irish. Laurence’s peace would demand dispossession of all cultural identity in a “faceless but beautiful negation.” Gerald’s nationalism requires that he reach outward to destroy; Laurence’s cosmopolitanism erases “selfish or racial” claims to any ground. The “doomed” conversation fails not only because it is never spoken, but because each argument seems to be on a trajectory to destroy itself, undermine itself.

As other critics have suggested, Laurence’s vision here is constructed in “the language of modernism” (DiBattista 242). Laurence’s role in the novel represents a cosmopolitan and modern worldview: he is “too modern” for any attachments according to Lady Naylor, especially when it comes to “girls” (268). This euphemistic reference to Laurence’s sexuality, along with his references to writing “that novel” about “cocktail parties or whimsical undergraduates” (174), offers a humorous glimpse of Laurence’s alignment with a kind of Oxbridge set of intellectual modernists. There is an embedded

critique of this “modern” worldview, however, which links him to the overarching critique leveraged by the text: a critique of *any* codes—traditional or revolutionary or modernist—that prevent authentic intimacy and emotion. We can read Laurence’s vision of civilization as a code that might prevent a negotiation of intimacy and mutual emotion due to the use of the phrase “unemotioned kindness” in the above passage. This odd phrase calls attention to itself by referencing the obligation of Kantian cosmopolitan hospitality and linguistically echoing the “unintimacy” that *already* taunts Lois and the text. Laurence’s vision accords with Kant’s notion of cosmopolitanism especially in its assertion that this form of civilization would bring an “end of battle,” even if that also means an end of art and culture. Significantly, Laurence’s vision also welcomes an end to “desire.”

The illusion of an ideal form transcending the imperfections of life—including the messiness or chaos of culture and desire—drives both modernism and hospitality. I suggest that Laurence’s vision describes a modernist cosmopolitanism in which the ideal of the form—the “crossing arches”—transcends heterogeneous community, achieving “faceless but beautiful negation.” Even Laurence’s own queerness is dissolved in this vision, erased by the regularity of the form of “crossing arches” and subsumed into an “unemotioned” future. This may reflect another kind of impossibility that Laurence recognizes, however: that his own desire for other men cannot be fulfilled except through total replacement of the “clamour” of militant and patriarchal competition—which demands space and race—with the “silence” of “negation.”

But in this negation of desire and emotion, Laurence is also cast at odds with Lois. There is an acquired comfort with him because of his detached acceptance of her—

“Laurence was comfortable to talk to because of his indifference to every shade of her personality” (*LS* 9)—but Lois would not share his vision. Laurence’s detachment echoes the narrative’s performative deflection of ethical and political responsibility and opposes the more *intimate* nature of Lois’s longing for Marda, and her longing for a negotiation *with* the IRA rebels. These differences in the homosexual experiences and desires of Lois and Laurence may reflect both the gendered differences in the forms that colonial-patriarchal control of domestic spaces take, and the shared challenges to sexual and emotional fulfillment.

While Gerald and Laurence, as evidenced in this scene, project their (contrasting) ideological worldviews into configurations of idealized futures (based on mythologized pasts), Lois struggles to resist the patterns cast about her and that would proscribe for her a designated future within *their* visions. This is most clearly dramatized when she violently objects (though without uttering a word and from behind a door) to being “clapped down under an adjective [. . .] like a fly in a tumbler” (83). In this earlier scene in the novel, Lois disrupts an overheard conversation between Francie Montmorency and Lady Naylor who are debating her potential/impossible love interest (Gerald). Lois crashes her water pitcher into her basin, cracking the pattern of flowers on it (83). The gap in the pattern on the basin represents Lois’s forced incompleteness—the alternative to fitting into a pattern. As a metaphor, the suspended pattern, like her incomplete mental map of Ireland, announces her own ideological (or narrative) vision as unfinished and undetermined. Her vision—and thus discursive identity—is only tangentially marked out in the ways she resists the discourses that construct her. Lois is another undialectizable singularity in the narrative, suspended by the vying narratives surrounding her such that

she is both overdetermined and yet invisible to direct scrutiny. In this light, it seems almost necessary that she disappear from the text before its resolution, and that she share a fate with Danielstown.

At the same time that Lois is contrasted with Laurence and prevented from a future with Marda, the text also prevents Lois's union with Gerald. Their disallowed union comes externally from Lady Naylor who disapproves of Gerald's class. Even Gerald is a victim of the demands of a colonial-patriarchy that is entangled with aristocratic tradition. As Lady Naylor craftily maneuvers Gerald to understand that his engagement with Lois is impossible, he senses the contradictory and painful push and pull of his predicament: "An unusual pendulum swung in him, he was ruined—resolute—ruined" (266). Lady Naylor's interference is moot, however, because Gerald's own imperialist vision seals his fate (sacrificed to the imperialist cause when an IRA bullet takes his life). The pendulum swing demands and refuses life at the same time: marriage, reproduction, consolidation of wealth and power, and military sacrifice.

On the way to his inevitable demise, however, the text constructs his notions of masculinity and femininity as both inextricable from his imperial vision and as threatening to Lois's emergence as a subject: the narrative's indirect construction of Lois from Gerald's point of view maintains her "perfectness as a woman" such that "[Lois] wasn't made to know, she was not fit for it. She was his integrity, of which he might speak to strangers but of which to her he would never speak" (*LS* 67). In the long passage quoted above, the text's ironic disapproval of Gerald's limitation is on display when his own power and clarity of thought become "blunted" by the mere proximity of society women. Lois's ambivalence towards him, then, is necessary for the text's suspension of

Lois as an emerging subject between, and in contrast to, the network of political and social traditions at a crossroads in Ireland in 1920.

We cannot forget the other emerging narrative possibility for Lois, either: the “trench-coat” in the woods and the rebel in the mill represent the nationalist impulses and the attempts to wrest the narrative of Ireland from the Anglo-Irish and the British. They also draw Lois’s vulnerability out into the open: her gender and her orphanhood, along with her singleness, exposing her subjectivity to the colonial-patriarchal superstructure. Told to leave by the rebel, she is reminded that she can’t leave without being married to Gerald. Significantly, however, when Gerald arrives at Danielstown to engage Lois, he too emerges from the woods, much like the rebel, announcing himself to the strolling Marda and Hugo metonymically as a trench-coat: “A trench-coat flickered between the trees, approaching” (120). Thus the two militarized male figures are conflated in the text—however opposite their political positions. Both seem to materialize from the woods around Danielstown in order to stir Lois’s sexual development and self-awareness as a political and social subject.

In conflating Gerald and the rebel, the text undermines the imperialist/nationalist binary construction of the narrative of Ireland. This possibility of both convergence and dissolution in the understanding of the enemies, Gerald and the IRA rebel, as somehow the same is heightened in Lois’s reaction to the news of the death of Gerald and others in an ambush. When Lois learns of Gerald’s death, she suddenly sees “Life . . . whole for a moment” as “one act of apprehension, the apprehension of death” (297). In this moment she is confronted with a baroque apprehension: “in allegory the observer is confronted

with the *facies hippocratica* of history . . . Everything . . . has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, [and] is expressed in a . . . death's head" (Benjamin, *Origin* 166).

Whether Bowen's ambivalence towards a modernist cosmopolitanism in this text is due to her own conservatism—reflective of a nostalgia for a "golden age" of Anglo-Irish Ascendancy in the eighteenth century—or if it suggests a shift in attitudes amidst the intellectual and aesthetic detachment of the 1920s and a growing sense of political urgency regarding individuals marked as "others" by nationalist and fascist movements, is a distinction difficult to make because of the baroque construction of ambivalence and oppositional tensions within the narrative. But Lois's position as a young *woman* is central to the text's exploration of the vying ideologies and political possibilities of the time. Ultimately, the text's critique not only of the Naylor and the Montmorencys but also of Laurence (for being affectively detached and intellectually complicit) and Marda (for marrying the English businessman and squashing the rebel's revolutionary stance) exposes a colonial-patriarchal legacy that seems poised to extend into the twentieth century, even as the Gerald—defenders of a British imperial age—are extinguished by the revolutionaries. Sustained by a hospitality which offers Lois protection but withholds intimacy, a modernist and cosmopolitan future seems ironically inhospitable for someone like Lois.

In turn, Lois's abrupt disappearance from the novel bears significance through absence, through an aesthetics of negative (or *weak*) potential; and this aesthetic effect can be linked to both Danielstown's ruination and the text's commentary on hospitality. After news of Gerald's death is brought to Danielstown, to which Lois first responds with courteousness and vacancy (like hospitality itself), a short break in the text on the page

signals her departure from the narrative—a performative blank space, a textual echo of the ruin’s evacuated space on the Irish landscape.⁹⁹ When the narrative picks up again, two weeks have passed and Lady Naylor reports to her friend that Lois has gone on “Tours. For her French, you know” (300). After three hundred pages of sustained tension regarding Lois’s romantic potential with first Hugo, then Gerald, and having suggested, and resisted, possible futures as artist, as wife—even, perhaps, as lover of Marda—Lois evades narrative resolution and reader expectations by slipping out the back door, so to speak. Lois’s failed romantic plot thus also breaks the narrative’s code of hospitality, and therefore resonates in the text as another kind of ruin of patriarchal-modernity.

Does Lois’s abrupt disappearance from the novel indicate an escape from social structures bound up by a discourse of hospitality and domestic space? Or simply her erasure? Perhaps the key is in the narrative perspective itself, which culminates in a post-human perspective of the “ruin” of Danielstown left behind by Irish rebels and repossessed by no one: “By next year light had possessed itself of the vacancy” (302). Having remained close to the Anglo-Irish characters throughout the novel until the final pages, the indirect discourse startlingly breaks free from that Anglo-Irish perspective. It takes on the perspective of the Irish landscape, now free even from the gaze of the Big House. If the Big House is the concrete manifestation of Anglo-Irish coloniality—masquerading as hospitality—then does its erasure from the landscape represent reparation?

While the disappearance of Lois Farquar from the text seems linked with the violent removal of Danielstown, the narrator’s emphasis on the “too clear form of the

⁹⁹ We see the use of this textual typography in Woolf’s novel as well, as discussed in the previous chapter. Here as in Woolf’s text, the space transfers contemplative responsibility to the reader.

ruin” ensures that the Big House retains aesthetic resonance for the text, and Ireland. Both Lois *and* Danielstown become resonating spaces in the narrative. If Lois’s failed marriage plot and the dispossession of Danielstown must be read *together* as the “too clear form of the ruin,” then the baroque suspension of space and time in a moment strung taught between preservation and dissolution offers both Lois and the reader a kind of choice that extends beyond the limits of the text.

The next chapter will consider the other side of the rhetorical Surplus Women coin, following the transient and disaffiliated “trafficked” figures in Djuna Barnes’s most famous novel, *Nightwood*. In a different consideration of cosmopolitanism and baroque aesthetic suspension, Barnes’s ruined bodies are suspended by a cosmopolitan sexual-spatialization of time—and identity formation—in 1920s Paris.

CHAPTER 3

BAROQUE BODIES AND DJUNA BARNES'S *NIGHTWOOD*

"In her face was the tense expression of an organism surviving in an alien element." (Barnes, Nightwood 15)

Djuna Barnes's interwar novel *Nightwood* is self-conscious about its elegiac role. Written and re-written over several years between 1927 and 1935, the novel not only recounts the demise of a love affair but also traces the passing of an age.¹⁰⁰ In her notes for a memoir, she wrote of the creative and cosmopolitan era she experienced in Paris in the 1920s as a period in which "You could do as you pleased" and "the expatriate made the best citizen"; but she also noted that "The dreadful thing is not that it was done but that it is over" (*Collected Poems* 239). This definitive statement, "it is over," is embedded in an otherwise ambivalent and ambiguous sentiment about an unfettered community and age and therefore indexes the expanding and retracting dynamics of Barnes's style as well as the historical moment it references. Like the other novels considered in this dissertation, *Nightwood* both looks backwards to an earlier post-war era and anticipates future disaster, but its baroque suspension of oppositional and ambivalent forces configures an opportunity for aesthetic engagement, even intervention. So, while the statement "it is over" echoes Elizabeth Bowen's similar framing of her novel's historical content as "over and done with," their textual experiments ask readers to imagine different futures, or at least *difference*.

In this second half of the dissertation I turn to "transient" settings. No longer anchored by aristocratic homes to distinct national landscapes, *Nightwood* travels through

¹⁰⁰ See Cheryl Plumb for a detailed discussion of Barnes's writing and revising process on this novel.

hotel rooms, urban cafés, and temporary residences that span European cities and even American woods. Its pages are populated by characters with no familial or national ties to each other or to their surroundings, and with characters whose identities are ambiguous, concealed, or invented. This scattered, disorienting and disintegrating quality is counterbalanced by a love story, or, rather, by a pursuit of love that might integrate and sustain life. The influence of the Great War and its aftermath on these dynamics is directly and indirectly addressed in the text. In this chapter, I identify contrasting narrative forms that Barnes uses to introduce these disaffiliated figures, and I argue that the clash of aesthetic styles recapitulates not only the classical/baroque cultural debates that accelerated during the interwar period but also the turbulent social politics and war trauma of the era. Barnes's narrative experimentalism explores the limits of authority to inscribe and proscribe bodies, and her novel demonstrates that race, gender, and sexuality become essentialized *through* different kinds of desire and violence.¹⁰¹ The "baroque bodies" that I will examine in this chapter both express and complicate that essentialism.

My reading of this novel focuses mainly on minor characters and on specific narrative introductions of them to the text. I focus especially on the acrobat Frau Mann, the two animals described in Dr. Matthew O'Connor's tangential anecdotes about the Great War, and Nikka the tattooed wrestler. I compare narrative descriptions of those figures to representations of the more central characters, Felix, Robin, and Nora, in order to trace differences in narrative constructions of subjectification and objectification. All of these figures emerge as "baroque bodies" in the sense of "their capacity to sustain

¹⁰¹ Barnes wrote that she had tried to "just write the essence of the thing" when describing her project in *Nightwood* (qtd. in Plumb 158). This chapter explores the narrative's feminist baroque engagements with "essence."

multiple identities that challenge philosophical, social and sexual expectations” (Judovitz 5). In reviewing sixteenth century through pre-French Revolution philosophical and literary texts about embodiment, Dalia Judovitz identifies a baroque conception of embodiment “not as an originary given, but as a script that attains specific meanings through its transpositions” (4-5). Baroque bodies are thus another kind of manifestation of the “baroque dilemma,” which William Egginton defines as “the problem of truth as a function of appearances” (26). In this case, the baroque dilemma is addressed in Barnes’s text not only through narrative styles that reveal or obscure meaning, but also at the level of character. This is because access to interior or psychological consciousness is blocked or overwritten by an omniscient narrator (who represents classical authority), and thus the reader can only interact with surfaces: surfaces of the text, and surfaces of the bodies represented in it.

Barnes’s interwar text imagines the extremes of transposed and scripted bodies that are placed and displaced by an omniscient narration and its various interruptions and digressions. Importantly, embodiment and the creative process itself become entangled in Djuna Barnes’s most famous text, manifesting in a prescient illustration of performativity.¹⁰² *Nightwood* not only presents characters whose transient and malleable identities are performative in the sense that they transform themselves in pursuit of legitimacy or spiritual or romantic salvation, but the narrative itself also performs as a kind of impossible pursuit of meaning. When surface is understood as skin—as the trembling hides of animals fearful of bombs, or the culturally inscribed and racially

¹⁰² I am using the term “performativity” in the sense Judith Butler has defined it in *Gender Trouble* and elsewhere. This term references the theory that bodies and identities are in a dynamic (rather than fixed) relationship with the social and discursive forms of their environments involving both reflection and transformation.

marked skin of a tattooed circus performer—the text demonstrates how violence and destructive desire reshape bodies and lives. I will argue that Barnes’s feminist baroque text transforms both the narrative and the disaffiliated figures within it into baroque bodies that can *write back* through this skin, however, transforming the reading experience. *Nightwood* is not simply an opportunity for objective interpretation nor simply an opportunity for subjectivization of vulnerability; rather, the text becomes an occasion for recognizing intersubjectivity.

Barnes is very much thinking through the ages at the same time that she is spatializing a cosmopolitan suspension of characters in a moment between two world wars. The novel opens with Felix Volkbein’s birth and ancestry in order to establish a history of religious and racial persecution.¹⁰³ The narrative moves from 1880 Vienna to 1468 Rome and back again in a matter of three paragraphs to establish a cycle—and stasis—of “degradation,” a racial memory which is the “sum total of what is the Jew” and allegorized by Felix’s ancestor running around the Italian Corso “for the amusement of the Christian populace” (N 4-5). Barnes’s approach to personal and social history is thus a baroque one that expands and retracts time and suspends trauma and violence within aesthetic beauty. As many readers have noted, *Nightwood* does not apply realist, mimetic, or scientific means to represent social lives—not even the stream-of-consciousness style used by her contemporaries like Joyce, Woolf, and Dorothy Richardson to convey psychological experience: “her interest is in the soul and the passions rather than the consciousness, and her manner of characterization is allegorical rather than mimetic”

103 Felix’s Jewishness was key to the novel in Barnes’s opinion, and she had applied for a Guggenheim grant to study the history of European anti-Semitism. As Cheryl Plumb notes, Felix’s “identity as a Jew precludes his inclusion in a society he admires, and his alienation produces longing for acceptance” (150). This dynamic of alienation and longing is central to my reading of Barnes’s text.

(Parsons 170-71). In a more Benjaminian sense of baroque allegory and representation, Barnes compiles myths and objects around her characters, and she plays with different kinds of narrative optics that frame her characters against—alongside and in contrast to—these objects and ideas. Each contrast between optics or between characters in turn also reveals something: it is a metonymical movement across narrative styles as well as narrative structure.¹⁰⁴

This dispersal of meaning across the narrative is also reflective of the dispersed lives represented in it: for Barnes, the decade after the war was marked by an “exodus” of people leaving “not only Mayfair and Peckham Rye, Berlin and Vienna, but Wisconsin and Brooklyn” to search for meaning and life, and to attempt to restore it aesthetically (*Collected Poems* 244-45). The novel’s constellation of characters and various manifestations of coercive desire and destructive violence also relies on a sense of cosmopolitanism as a sexual-spatial idea. This sexual-spatial configuration suspends and makes mobile at the same time the queer modernity reflected in and constructed by Barnes’s text.

For this dual sense of cosmopolitanism and queer modernity we can build on Hiram Pérez’s theory of gay white male modernity in terms of “gay cosmopolitanism”: the gay cosmopolitan is “a subject position originating with (but not limited to) a white, urban, leisure-class gay male whose desire is cast materially onto the globe at the close of the nineteenth century,” and whose “gay modernity . . . does not neatly inhabit the

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Frank’s 1945 essay introduced “spatial form” as a theory of modernist aesthetics and examined *Nightwood* as an exemplary case. This designation simultaneously established Barnes’s place among the canon of modernists and limited critical analysis of *Nightwood* to this specific aesthetic contribution until feminist criticism turned to biographical and thematic content and shifted critical interest (almost entirely) to the novel’s treatment of sexuality and gendered violence.

margins of the nation, occupying instead a more complicated cosmopolitan condition auxiliary to colonial and neocolonial expansion" (5). For Pérez, the gay male cosmopolitan is mobilized by both real and imaginary encounters with what I would call classical icons of masculinity (the sailor, soldier, and cowboy), and by modern technologies of trade, transport, and war.

On the other hand, Barnes's lesbian cosmopolitans (Nora and Robin)—who Shari Benstock has framed in terms of "Expatriate Sapphic Modernism"—are mobilized by encounters with circus performers and other bohemian figures already displaced by war, or who find new financial opportunities in postwar metropolitan centers. Barnes's cosmopolitan lesbians, and her text, are also mobilized not by "modern" technologies but by baroque techniques such as allegory, melancholy, and spiritual revelation. Both forms of queer cosmopolitan desire, however, are constituted through constructions of primitivism—a fantasy of otherness, in terms of race and history, which helps to define this sexual-spatial form of cosmopolitanism as globally erotic.¹⁰⁵ For the purposes of this dissertation, we can read *Nightwood*'s cosmopolitanism in terms of its facilitation of detachments—from traditional family structures and national identities—that allow both loneliness and sexual mobility. In this way, *Nightwood*'s cosmopolitanism accords with the external and disintegrative danger that it represents for Bowen in *The Last September*, but it now provides the primary setting for Barnes's consciously queer narrative.

Barnes's imbrication of cosmopolitanism and primitivism is what has contributed to the difficulty of analyzing *Nightwood*'s politics and its investments in racial and sexual otherness. While Jane Marcus and others have found a feminist critique of fascism and

¹⁰⁵ We could say that the sexual-spatial cosmopolitan form becomes also racial-temporal through engagements with primitivism.

anti-Semitism in Barnes's celebratory depictions of social outcasts, critics such as Erin Carlston and Karen Kaivola have pointed to the text's problematic "flirtation" with fascism and racism.¹⁰⁶ Many leave this issue as an open question and describe it as a lingering challenge for readers. My reading combines these considerations: Barnes's feminist baroque text relies on visual and thematic tropes that reiterate cultural myths and stereotypes that have debased and "disqualified" certain bodies. Moreover, the text problematically appropriates the precarity of these individuals—their lack of social and institutional stability and power—to construct an allegory about aesthetics and identity performance. However, I suggest that the feminist baroque capability of the text arises when the narrative techniques of coercion and objectification are recognized as forms of authority that can be (and often are) resisted or deconstructed—by "baroque bodies," or by a feminist reader.

Marcus has argued that "*Nightwood* is problematic for the woman reader and unusual for modernism because it is such a tightly closed text, and the narration is so distant and detached" (98). But I see the text's performative loquaciousness and proliferating stories within stories as indicative of its tenuous narrative control. Jean Radford has commented that the narrative's many voices and many styles "seem to include all possible statements and their contraries" (118), which suggests a kind of perpetual raveling and unraveling of itself. Like Woolf's induction novel, which both proliferates prologues and performs as prologue, Barnes's experimental narrative generates uncertainty. Crucially, like Woolf's and Bowen's narratives, the novel's

¹⁰⁶ These influential analyses include "Laughing at Leviticus: *Nightwood* as Woman's Circus Epic," by Marcus; *Thinking Fascism: Sapphic Modernism and Fascist Modernism*, by Carlston; and "The 'beast turning human': Constructions of the 'Primitive' in *Nightwood*" by Kaivola.

enigmatic last chapter not only escapes narrative control but also transfers narrative responsibility to the reader.¹⁰⁷

It is important to remember that Barnes herself was “coerced” sexually according to biographical accounts—there likely was incestual abuse by her grandmother whom she loved, and there are conflicting accounts of Barnes being raped by either her father or someone her father allowed to rape her. She was also forced to marry a man more than thirty years older than her when she was just eighteen—a marriage she escaped after two months (Henke 166-67). Therefore, the missing “objective correlative for the psychic fragmentation . . . that haunts the text” thus resonates in terms of both war and sexual violence (Henke 167). Barnes addressed this missing center in her editorial exchanges with Emily Coleman, who helped Barnes revise and eventually publish *Nightwood*. Barnes writes that she “was indifferent to the place *from whence my spirit arose*, being interested in the resurrection” (qtd. in Plumb 157, original emphasis). This religious language—an obsession of hers—connects Barnes’s aesthetic and intellectual efforts to the Baroque of the Counter-Reformation. Thus, we can consider the entwinement of violence and desire in Baroque art as a model for Barnes, such as Bernini’s sculpture *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, which depicts the moment Teresa receives her revelation and spiritual transformation (see Figure 7 in the conclusion to this dissertation). The violently religious moment of ecstasy and pain at the end of an angel’s spear is the kind of aesthetic-erotic register Barnes wanted to achieve with *Nightwood*: a kind of transmutation of her own confusing and traumatic encounters with sex and violence into art. Monika Kaup argues that Barnes offers baroque forms as an “indirect” route to the

¹⁰⁷ Barnes wrote about the ending: “as for what the end promises (?) let the reader make up his own mind, if hes [sic] not an idiot he'll know” (qtd. in Plumb 153).

abstract ideas that animate the text, such as loss and love, and that “Barnes would have been able to study the visual culture of the Counter-Reformation baroque in Paris and other European cities that she visited in 1931” (80). This indirectness, and this concretization of abstract ideas in evocative images of bodies, served a particular purpose in Counter-Reformation art: to facilitate revelation, to coerce love, and to resurrect the power of the Roman Catholic Church amid a scattered and weakening global empire. It thus seems a fitting inspiration for Barnes’s interwar context.

Barnes’s baroque and queer modernism, despite its melancholic tone, can be considered as hopeful about the creative potential of a cosmopolitanism that might offer new kinds of wholeness and integration for the broken and traumatized bodies in a postwar world—and it is this quality that makes it modernist. But ultimately *Nightwood*’s characters struggle to find enough love and companionship to sustain a life lived together. This failure may come from inside and outside: the bombs that obliterate and the laws that discriminate or incriminate are external attacks on life and choice, but sexual and racial desires that demand absorption or objectivization rather than collaboration also undermine the possibility of negotiated and egalitarian intimacy. As Peter Kalliney argues about Barnes’s cosmopolitan baroque bodies, “There is a price to be paid, however, for such acts of courageous self-fashioning: the characters in *Nightwood* are lonely, miserable, and extremely vulnerable” (Kalliney 82).

Frau Mann and the ‘Lesson of Barbette’

While there are many examples of gender-ambiguous figures in *Nightwood*—perhaps every character could be analyzed as such—there is one figure, introduced early in the narrative and serving only a minor role, who deserves more exploration and may

help to establish the text's overall themes regarding art, truth, gender, and embodiment. Frau Mann is introduced to the narrative in the first chapter, "Bow Down," as an extension of the novel's introduction to Felix Volkbein, one of the four central characters of the novel. Frau Mann can therefore be read as both a proliferation of Felix and a foil for him. The narrative's attention to Frau Mann, and my reading of her as a baroque body, both reflects and complicates Felix's essentialism in *Nightwood*. Felix's essentialism—as the stereotype of the "wandering Jew"—is important in Barnes's suspension of disaffiliated and disqualified subjects in this interwar and cosmopolitan moment. As Cheryl Plumb points out, Felix's "identity as a Jew precludes his inclusion in a society he admires, and his alienation produces longing for acceptance" (150). This dynamic of alienation and longing is central to Barnes's text and to my reading of its baroque configuration of suspended forms in oppositional tension.

Felix is drawn to the circus, which in *Nightwood* represents a queer cosmopolitanism *within* the cosmopolitan potential of interwar Paris, and is therefore another kind of narrative *mise en abyme* that we have seen in other texts in this dissertation: "The people of the theatre and the ring were for him as dramatic and as monstrous as a consignment on which he could never bid. That he haunted them as persistently as he did was evidence of something in his nature that was turning Christian" (N 15). Felix is always an outsider, society's internal ambivalence which consolidates national and racial integrity through negative capability, yet he finds a reflection of his own "immense disqualification" within the circus (N 15).

The function of Felix's desire—to turn Christian, to be a spectator of monstrosity, to possess something unattainable—is itself an ambivalent force that both shapes Felix

from the outside and drives him from within towards a community. Ironically, his Jewishness is as desirable to Christians as the monstrosity he wishes to observe at the circus, and therefore his desire to turn Christian is a circular paradox of fetish and hate. In this sense, the circus reflects back to him, and to the reader of Barnes's text, an opportunity to explore a spectacle of otherness.¹⁰⁸

One important figure who emerges from this embedded queer community is a trapeze artist, the "Duchess of Broadback," who befriends Felix at a carnival after-party. Also known as "Frau Mann," the acrobat receives an extended ekphrastic introduction to the text:

Her legs had the specialized tension common to aerial workers; something of the bar was in her wrists, the tan bark in her walk, as if the air, by its very lightness, by its very non-resistance, were an almost insurmountable problem, making her body, though slight and compact, seem much heavier than that of women who stay upon the ground. In her face was the tense expression of an organism surviving in an alien element. She seemed to have a skin that was the pattern of her costume: a bodice of lozenges, red and yellow, low in the back and ruffled over and under the arms, faded with the reek of her three-a-day control, red tights, laced boots—one somehow felt they ran through her as the design runs through hard holiday candies, and the bulge in the groin where she took the bar, one foot caught in the flex of the calf, was as solid, specialized and as polished as oak. The stuff of the tights was no longer a covering, it was herself; the span of the tightly stitched crotch was so much her own flesh that she was as unsexed as a doll. The needle that had made one the property of the child made the other the property of no man. (15-16)

The intense focus on the acrobat's body is conveyed by the omniscient narrator and thus offers the reader an experience of voyeuristic gazing at Frau Mann's "monstrosity" in a way that simulates the spectatorship of Felix and others flocking to gawk. How the

¹⁰⁸ This is reminiscent of the effect of the baroque induction discussed in my first chapter. The play-within-play can dislodge the illusion of otherness by conscripting the spectator into an experience of otherness through reorganization of the roles of performance and spectatorship.

narrator describes that body, however, leaves room for a negotiation between Frau Mann's construction of herself, and the spectator's interpretation of her.

At first, it seems that the performer's act, as well as her costume, have penetrated to her flesh and being such that distinction between circus *persona* and private *person* seems to be lost, therefore extending the lie of the stage or a performance to the narrative description of the performer's body. A trace of the circus apparatus can be seen in her wrists, for example, but at the same time her heavier-than-woman physique becomes evident when she is removed from her aerial performance space, which not only hints at a gender transgression but identifies gender performance itself as a negotiation between embodiment and environment. The queer body—for Frau Mann is certainly queer when she is not on stage—can be recognized as struggling to “survi[ve] in an alien element” where the air can seem an “almost insurmountable problem.”

The figure of Frau Mann, explicitly gendered “her” in Barnes's text, is likely based on the iconic circus and vaudeville performer Barquette, a female impersonator who performed in Paris and other European cities in the 1920s and early 1930s. Amy Lyford suggests that “Barquette was a legend [in the 1920s], as much of a cultural icon to Parisian audiences as Michael Jackson was to fans of the late twentieth century” (165). To my knowledge, no analysis has identified a link between Frau Mann and Barquette. However, Barquette's notoriety within the vaudeville and avant-garde circles in Paris during the same time that Barnes was deeply embedded in these same circles as a journalist and entertainment critic would suggest that the resemblances between Barquette and Frau Mann should not be ignored. Furthermore, there is a direct reference to Barquette in Barnes's notes, collected in the 2005 volume edited by Phillip Herring and Osias

Stutman, where she writes: “Barbette the female impersonator, the only one whose hands did not give him away” (246).

The name “Barbette,” which combines the masculine term for “beard” in French with a feminine ending, is echoed in the gender duality of the character’s name “Frau Mann.” The name “Barbette,” a stage name for Vander Clyde, an aerialist from Texas, might also suggest “barbed wire,” a play on the high wire act they performed while also invoking some of the edginess of the gender-transgressive performance.¹⁰⁹ This edginess was what attracted attention to Barbette’s Paris performances in 1923 and again in 1926, especially from an expatriate crowd made up of American writers and “society women” (qtd. in Steegmuller 134). Clyde recounts a story of being ambushed in their dressing room by a journalist, “obviously hoping to find something” (qtd. in Steegmuller 134). The journalist found Clyde wearing black-tinted “skin-bleaching cream” on their face, which prompted the journalist to describe Barbette as “Two-sexed on the stage and two-colored at home” (qtd. in Steegmuller 134). Clyde’s gender transformation was thus also suggestive of racial transformation, and Clyde’s own practice of skin-bleaching to become a woman on stage means that femininity and whiteness were entwined as stage *techniques*. In Barnes’s novel, the narrator describes Frau Mann at an after-party “removing the paint with the hurried technical felicity of an artist cleaning a palette” (17).

There are significant differences between Barbette and Frau Mann, however, and to trace these in terms of aesthetic theories about gender performance and embodied performativity it is necessary to consider the primary aesthetic theories published about

¹⁰⁹ I use the pronoun “they” here to refer to Vander Clyde’s double or ambiguous gender identity. Clyde did not use this pronoun, nor she/her, however, so my usage of pronouns in this section will indicate either Barbette as “she/her,” or Clyde as “he/him,” and the spaces in which there is possibility of transition, I will use “they/them.”

Barbette at the time. The most famous of these is Jean Cocteau's article "Le Numero Barbette," published in *Nouvelle Revue Française* in July of 1926, an essay which, as Lydia Crowson argued in an article on Cocteau and Barbette in 1976, articulates Cocteau's own aesthetic theory of performance.¹¹⁰ For Cocteau, "Barbette is never in between; he is either man *or* woman, Jeekyll *or* Hyde" (Forrest 37-8, original emphasis). By emphasizing the *deception* of Barbette's act and its effect on an audience, Cocteau relies on a gender essentialism that assigns sex a "truth" that a performance can mask and unmask, but not change. This insistence on the essentialism of gender—and by extension, of "truth"—has also been identified as part of Barbette's performance, however. The theater and dance theorist Mark Franko critiques Barbette's act for its reassertion of a "sexual polarity" in its denouement, which "de-emphasize[s] the ambivalence" of Barbette's androgyny and instead forces the audience to see the performance, retrospectively, as "the either/or of male/female" (Franko 597).

This issue of manipulating or forcing the audience to see or choose a lie over the truth is what Cocteau ultimately celebrates in Barbette's achievement, which he considers to be the fulfillment of the idea that the theater is a "trick-factory where truth has no currency" (Cocteau qtd. in Steegmuller 138). For Cocteau and Clyde, to make the audience *believe* the lie of gender performance was the ultimate achievement in theatre aesthetics. This also enforces a reading of bodies as something essential and therefore classical rather than as already transforming, as always caught in a moment of transforming, which is what a baroque body, in contrast, is. Clyde's development of the

¹¹⁰ Another important review was written by the Surrealist Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, whose own fascist leanings are revealed in his argument that Barbette's aesthetic achievement portends the possibility of a future human race that is, frankly, Barbette's gender and sex: male femininity. See Lyford's discussion pp. 177-79).

Barbette act relied on gender expectations in the theatre that stretch back to social constraints around gender and sexuality in the Elizabethan tradition of drama. Clyde was fascinated to learn, for example, that women in Shakespeare's plays would have been played by "boys," and when he was told that he could only have a job with the high-wire troupe if he pretended to be a girl, he decided to develop an act that would "play on masculine-feminine contrast" on the stage (Steegmuller 132). Because he had been told that an audience would be more "impressed" by a woman who is not only in danger but evocatively "plunging and gyrating" (Clyde qtd. in Steegmuller 132), Clyde developed an act that would shift focus from the thrill of watching a woman acrobat to the thrill of seeing a woman transform into a man on stage. The implication here, of course, is that the physical feat of the high-wire act is as strenuous as the feat of *becoming* a man or a woman in a way that meets social expectations for that gender.

Built into Barbette's performance, then, is not only an exploration of the gender binary, but an appropriation of gender performativity as a source of the "mystification" at the core of performance itself. In Barbette's popular act, it was the *successful performance of gender transgression* that stimulated audiences and made her an attraction: it was the final "reveal" of Barbette's gender difference at the end of her routine, an "unmasking" of Barbette's gender performance, not just their sex, that served as the climax of the act and solidified their place as an icon on the vaudeville and carnival circuits in the biggest cities of the United States and Europe during the interwar period, especially in Paris in 1923.¹¹¹ France, as Lyford explains in her study of Surrealist artists

¹¹¹ For more discussion of Barbette's act, see Lydia Crowson's 1976 article in *Modern Drama*, which offers a discussion of Barbette's act in terms of Jean Cocteau's developing aesthetic theories of theater and performance. See also Amy Lyford's (2007) discussion of Barbette in terms of French Surrealists' exploration of post-WWI gender anxiety and construction. As a brief description of Barbette's act, the

in the context of post war reconstruction, experienced the same demographical imbalance between men and women as a result of WWI casualties discussed in this study's Introduction. To support national efforts to rebuild a decimated population and recover from political instability, the government invested in growth by incentivizing both familial reproduction and industrial production (Lyford 3-4). Therefore, Barquette's evocative performance "confused the well-defined gender roles that lay at the heart of France's 'return to order' by blurring the lines between masculinity and femininity" (Lyford 165). Especially among the expatriate artists and cosmopolitan drifters and refugees, Clyde/Barquette represented a triumph of *evasion* of such nationalistic and biopolitical demands.

Though Barnes seems influenced by Cocteau's essay, particularly his theorizing of Barquette's performance in order to construct an argument about the nature of theater and performance more generally, she also diverges from Cocteau's insistence on Barquette's *either/or* gender performance. In Barnes's representation of Frau Mann in *Nightwood*, no sex dichotomy or "gender reveal" is forced onto the reader. Instead, Frau Mann maintains an ambiguity of gender that teases the page and thus invites the reader to question—or fantasize. But most importantly, Frau Mann's sexual and gender identities remain elusive. Thus, Frau Mann performs as a baroque body in Barnes's text, shaped by the narrator's persistent use of the pronoun "her," but also resisting clarity by extending a

following should be helpful: Barquette appears on stage in full ball gown, ostrich feathers, blonde wig, and affirms her gender identity as a woman by performing a brief strip tease, accentuating feminine gestures and physical attributes by removing her costume until a sleek acrobat's costume is left. She then performs her aerial routine. At the end of this routine, she accepts applause and runs off the stage, only to return for a curtain call. During the curtain call, Barquette removes her wig to reveal a masculine, short haircut, then reinforces the gender of a *boy* by miming sports play and then hopping on one foot and making gestures reminiscent of a street urchin. Vander Clyde/Barquette therefore accentuates gender performance on both sides of the man/woman binary, transforming gender into a stage performance and physical routine—both routines an echo of the physical and emotional strenuousness and dedication of the aerial act itself.

bulging groin that is as “specialized and as polished as oak.” At the same time that the narrator genders her “she,” Frau Mann’s costume “unsexed” her.

The text’s gender-ambiguous description of Frau Mann—which retains the pronoun “her” but which emphasizes masculine traces in her wrists, groin, and step—may better reflect Man Ray’s iconic photograph of Vander Clyde transforming into Barquette (see Figure 5). This iconic image freezes Clyde/Barquette in their transitional stage, neither him nor her, and thus re-enacts the kind of sexual-spatial suspension of identities and possibilities that Barnes’s understanding of a queer cosmopolitanism provides. When the narrator says that Frau Mann’s costume “unsexed” her, the text calls attention to the neither/nor *potentiality* or *becoming* quality of Frau Mann’s body, and to the potential freedoms of disaffiliation. Importantly, in the baroque body of Frau Mann, “sex” itself can be re-seen as a product of both performance and interpretation, which, by definition, are ephemeral and dynamic—yet, as Kalliney’s comment about Barnes’s cosmopolitanism suggests, this also leaves Frau Mann and other baroque bodies vulnerable.

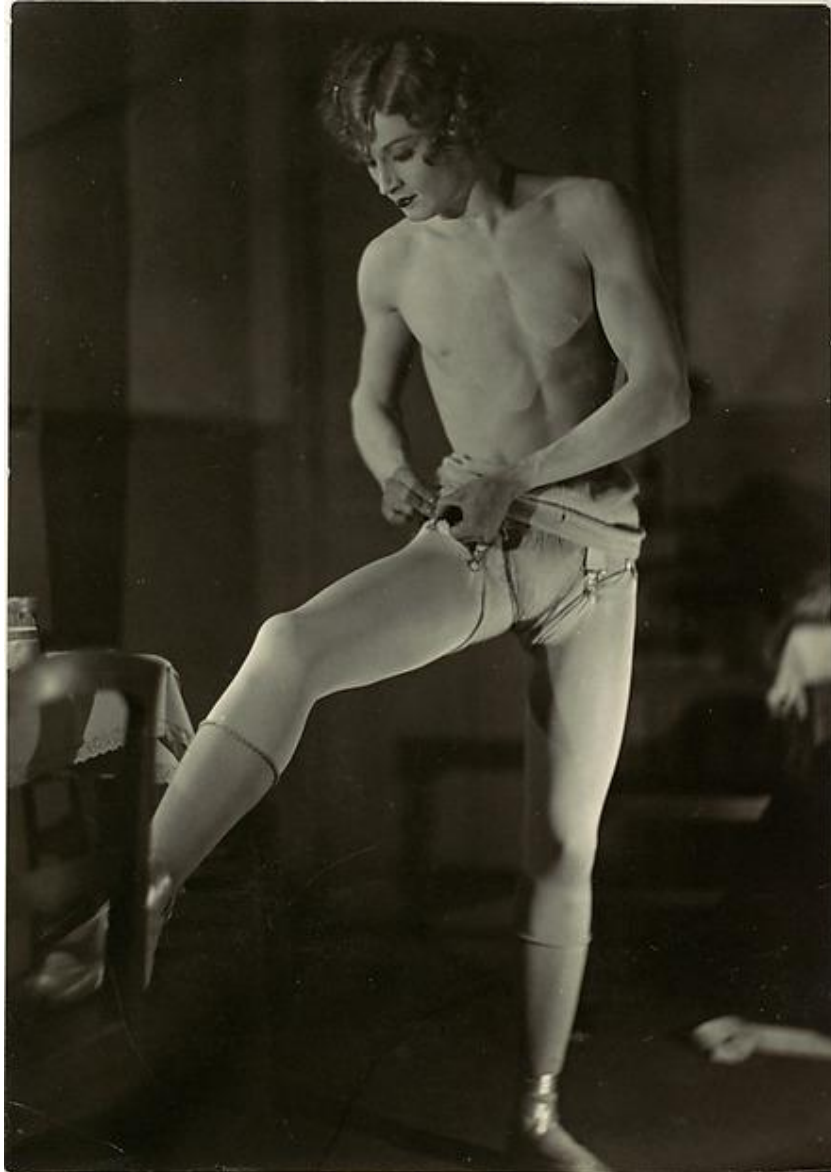


Figure 5: “Barbette Dressing,” Man Ray, 1926. © Man Ray 2015 Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY / ADAGP, Paris 2020. Note the wrapped pelvis which obscures Clyde’s male anatomy and resembles the description of Frau Mann’s “unsexed” groin.

Barbette and Frau Mann, and the gender contortionism trope they represent, function as metaphors for the poetic or creative process itself for both Cocteau and Barnes. Barnes’s presentation of baroque bodies—of nonconforming and discursively resistant modern subjects—does more than merely aestheticize cultural perversion or marginalization, it actually appropriates the embodied experience of modern subjectivity

and the performativity of identity to construct a theory of the creative process, particularly the relationship between art and truth. While Cocteau's interpretation emphasizes a split between truth and art that performance can exploit, Barnes's *baroque* Frau Mann not only undermines the dichotomy between genders, sexes, and between art and truth, as *false choices*, but also makes room for the reader's engagement in the performance. In this way, Barnes's text plays with the ideas of essentialism, demonstrates the ways that gender and sexuality are coerced or projected onto bodies, and also leaves open a performance not only beyond the stage—for Frau Mann is seen at the *after-party*—but beyond the text.

Furthermore, I suggest that Barnes's insistence on the *labor* of the creative process to some degree counters her tendency towards appropriation and stereotyping in this instance, and thus perhaps affords different consideration of the stereotyped representations of other identity "tricksters" in the text. It is Frau Mann's baroque body, with its traces of the *work* of performance and of the labor-intensive (not to mention dangerous high wire act) *performance* of gender, which illuminates this lesson and distinguishes her aesthetic project from Cocteau's more essentialist aesthetic theory. Cocteau fixates on the *duality* of Barbette as the "root of art" (Ritter 188), and on the idea that there is a truth, a fixed identity, which Barbette has managed to hide or reveal through performance. This essentialist sense of identity trickery as transgression has important implications for those devalued and disqualified bodies who have fled to cosmopolitan cities—where invention and mobility have more currency—in order to "pass" as citizens of the world. This cosmopolitan form of queer citizenship might provide access to financial opportunities and material living conditions—or love—that

are foreclosed to them in settings that privilege familial ties and strict interpretations of national and ethnic identities. But if their mobility is considered as transgression—as Cocteau’s essentialist aesthetic theory presumes—then they are subject to various forms of punishment, whether personally, socially, or legally.

On an aesthetic level, Barnes’s representation of the gender contortionist in Frau Mann suggests that “duality” is rather a *fluidity* and, more importantly, an *illusion*: Frau Mann as androgyne gives the lie to the conception that “reality” is the opposite of creative process. At the same time, Barnes’s attention to the physical description of Frau Mann’s body emphasizes the physical effects of performance, not to mention the sexualized expectations of spectators (inside and outside of the text) who participate in the construction of (even fetishization of) Frau Mann’s gender, and their (our) projection of gender onto Frau Mann’s body. This inside-outside, or performance-reality, back and forth configured on the levels of both the sexual-spatial narrative and the story of an acrobat’s life is what a feminist baroque aesthetic can both represent and critique.

War in the Gap, and the Recuperative Function of Baroque Bodies

Djuna Barnes’s relationship to World War I was primarily shaped by her experiences of postwar reconstruction in France and England in the 1920s and 1930s where she lived and worked. Barnes went to Paris in 1921 on commission from *McCall’s*, where she stayed for ten years writing articles for magazines; she then went back and forth between Paris and England until she returned to New York in 1940, at the start of the next war. Barnes was conscious of the unique historical context she was part of—in Paris, especially—during the interwar years, where “you could touch the hand of beggars and Rothschilds,” mixing with both royalty and up-and-coming artists, and when “the

expatriate made the best citizen” (Barnes *Collected Poems* 238, 239). Not only does the circus perform as a queer cosmopolitanism within the historical one in Paris during the 1920s, but Barnes also thought of the interwar cosmopolitan scene as its own kind of circus *of* modernity, both heterogeneous and participatory, as in Laura Winkiel’s reading of the circus function in the novel, but even more importantly as a kind of containment and aestheticization of otherness. Barnes also recognized this queer cosmopolitan interwar moment as temporary: “The dreadful thing is not that it was done, but that it was over” (Barnes “Notes” 239). As I note at the beginning of this chapter, Barnes’s ambiguity in this sentence captures the ambivalence of the age—what does she mean by “done,” exactly? And does she mean the 1920s, or something else, is “over”? Barnes suspends meaning in the sentence between an acknowledgment of joy and love that was made possible through the queer cosmopolitanism she found in Paris in the decade after the war, and an acknowledgement of “dread” during that time.

Therefore, she absorbed the post-war anxiety of her European context as well. Amy Lyford’s study of the link between postwar gender anxieties and French Surrealism of the 1920s helps to frame the significance of Barnes’s inclusion of war imagery in *Nightwood*. Lyford’s study offers an important analysis of how postwar reconstruction in France exasperated the already-disillusioned Surrealists—including the central figure André Breton—who served in the war as either soldiers or medical staff and felt that the war revealed the lie of modernity: “modern industrial warfare had left millions dead and threatened social order with the rising specters of economic disaster and political instability” (Lyford 3). Lyford describes a “gap” between the reality that war had left on the social, economic, and natural landscapes—including on bodies—on one hand, and the

state-projected images of a French future built on myths of masculine strength and feminine motherhood, on the other (3-4). The gap, however, is what the Surrealists exploited for their cultural projects that included distorted and dismembered bodies, as well as hyper-sexualized bodies. According to their polemical artistic statements, these shock tactics were meant to undermine the social status quo and instigate revolution.¹¹² Feminist critiques of Surrealist rendering of women's bodies, in particular, have identified the aestheticization of the male gaze, which objectifies not only women but also sexuality for the purpose of symbolic control. In this way, "women" are evacuated of agency and sexuality and exist as objects, as passive receptacles or idealized icons to demonstrate the masculine spectator's authority.¹¹³ Lyford's study, however, points to ways some Surrealists complicated rigid notions of gender and sexuality, and Robin Adèle Greeley has argued that Surrealist compositions often emphasize, rather than prevent, "negotiation" between the objectified or mutilated feminine or sexualized bodies and the masculine or authoritative frames in which they are placed (50). It is impossible to ignore the centrality of gendered bodies, especially women's bodies, in the art and politics of Surrealists, however.

Barnes would have been familiar with both the Surrealists and their cultural context in 1920s and 1930s Paris, and though she did not align herself with them, their influence can be seen in *Nightwood*. In my reading, Barnes's text makes use of Surrealist objectivism tropes which fetishize and render silent women and women's sexuality, but her feminist baroque rejoinder to the misogyny of Surrealism transfers creative agency to

¹¹² See André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)," and "Second Manifesto of Surrealism (1929)." Collected in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*.

¹¹³ See Mary Ann Caws for a discussion of Surrealism and women's bodies, especially pp. 53-55. See also Robin Adèle Greeley's article on feminist critiques of Surrealism.

baroque (rather than ideal) bodies, as well as facilitates a feminist reader. One overt example of the Surrealist influence is the extended description that introduces Robin Vote to the narrative,

On a bed, surrounded by a confusion of potted plants, exotic palms and cut flowers, faintly over-sung by the notes of unseen birds, which seemed to have been forgotten—left without the usual silencing cover, which, like cloaks on funeral urns, are cast over their cages at night by good housewives—half flung off the support of the cushions from which, in a moment of threatened consciousness she had turned her head, lay the young woman, heavy and dishevelled. Her legs, in white flannel trousers, were spread as in a dance, the thick-lacquered pumps looking too lively for the arrested step. Her hands, long and beautiful, lay on either side of her face.

The perfume that her body exhaled was of the quality of that earth-flesh, fungi, which smells of captured dampness and yet is so dry, overcast with the odour of oil of amber, which is an inner malady of the sea, making her seem as if she had invaded a sleep incautious and entire. Her flesh was the texture of plant life, and beneath it one sensed a frame, broad, porous and sleep-worn, as if sleep were a decay fishing her beneath the visible surface. About her head there was an effulgence as of phosphorus glowing about the circumference of a body of water—as if her life lay through her in ungainly luminous deteriorations—the troubling structure of the born somnambule, who lives in two worlds—meet of child and desperado.

Like a painting by the *douanier* Rousseau, she seemed to lie in a jungle trapped in a drawing room (in the apprehension of which the walls have made their escape), thrown in among the carnivorous flowers as their ration; the set, the property of an unseen *dompteur*, half lord, half promoter, over which one expects to hear the strains of an orchestra of wood-winds render a serenade which will popularize the wilderness. (37-38)

The scene is described as a staged tableau, the “set” of which is painted in like Henri Rousseau’s proto-Surrealist *The Dream*, Robin taking the place of that famous painting’s reclining woman figure: both immediately recognizable as feminine ideal and forever foreclosed to complex interiority in its simplistic rendering. The construction of Robin as this feminine ideal transforms her into an object (or plant or animal), devoid of (masculine) human rationality or soul. The combination of nature and artifice (the jungle and the stage) in this scene suspends Robin outside of history, outside of time and space,

caught somewhere between in a way that precludes her subjecthood. Indeed, Cheryl Plumb has found in letters between Barnes and Emily Coleman that Barnes deliberately reduces Robin's characterization to a kind of "primitive other": "I do not want to connect her in any way with the present temporal world as we know it, it is why I did not let her say more than two words for herself in the book" (Barnes qtd. in Plumb 156).

In the introductory passages describing Robin in the novel, she is not an authoritative subject in the narrative or social sense; instead, she signifies as either "child" or "desperado" – agentless and threatening to the extent that a spectator (a rational subject) might have to account for her state of desperation. In contrast to the corporeality of the animals in the war anecdotes that I will describe below, whose trembling hides, tear-filled eyes, or bleeding bodies anchor them to the war context of the world around them, Robin's "thick-lacquered pumps" are "too lively" for the otherwise frozen image. In other words, Robin-the-frozen-ideal recedes from the plane of the lived world, attached to the spectator's world only via the objects that signal femininity, objects that some masculine agent (like the douanier or the dompteur) has arranged.

Importantly, these associations with animals and plantlife also construct Robin in terms of the "primitive," an important cultural category for Barnes and other modernists of this period. The concept of "primitive" contributes to a hierarchical organization of identity in which "otherness" and "outsiderness" are excluded from a Western concept of history (as progressive, as moving towards idealism). That which is "primitive" is *always* outside of history in an Enlightenment construction of culture and society, just as the gendered, sexualized, and racialized body is always excluded from authorized perspective: the body is, rather, always an *object* of perspective. This is to also say that

what is idealized is made a passive object for consumption.¹¹⁴ Therefore, the designation of Robin as “primitive” is important in *Nightwood* and in my discussion.¹¹⁵

The Surrealist and primitive construction of Robin also signals a specific racialized experience of authority in terms of biopolitics. Barnes’s use of animal and plant imagery in order to represent (or perform) Robin’s (and other characters’) historical marginalization correlates to what Eric Santner has theorized regarding the tradition of “creaturely” subjectivity within, especially, a German-Jewish tradition of “political-theology” (12, 26). In the writing of Walter Benjamin, for example, Santner traces a development of a theory of the *Kreatur*, which describes the relationship of human experience to sovereign power (biopolitics) that emphasizes a sense of borders: the lines between human and animal, between civilization and nature. In Barnes’s reflection on interwar Paris and her construction of a queer cosmopolitanism, borders (and bodies) can be imagined in terms of this *creaturely* dimension of human life: Robin and other baroque bodies exist not only in an in-between or marginal state, but both inside *and* outside sovereign domains, as in Giorgio Agamben’s sense of bare life.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, the concept of the creaturely, that which *is created* (and thus passive rather than active), contains the complex notions of subjectivity and sovereignty, as well as the notion of *becoming* or the on-going process of *being created*, within its term.¹¹⁷

114 See Diane Warren’s discussion of *Nightwood* in *Djuna Barnes’s Consuming Fictions* for more about the relationship of subject formation, idealization, and consumption.

115 For an extended discussion of the concept of “primitive” in terms of Barnes’s novel, see Kaivola’s 1993 article.

116 See *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*.

117 See Julia Lupton’s “Creature Caliban” for more discussion of the word “creature” in this sense, as she traces its derivation and analyzes its significance in Shakespeare’s play, *The Tempest*. Santner draws heavily on Lupton’s research and argument.

Correlation between Barnes's text and this "political-theological" tradition, even if indirect and idiosyncratic, is convincing when we remember Barnes's research and reading interests during the 1920s and 1930s, which included the history of anti-Semitism in Europe and the seventeenth-century writings of Robert Burton and other Baroque writers.¹¹⁸ Barnes's dual interests in the history of social marginalization and a baroque cultural history might be linked in terms of a developing theory of aesthetics, in a conviction regarding the co-constructing relationship (rather than disjunction) between aesthetics and embodiment. In the above passage and throughout *Nightwood*, Barnes literalizes not only the uncertain borders between nature and civilization but importantly foregrounds the authoritarian dimensions of categorization and emplacement in this dynamic: it is the *douanier* who can place and remove Robin in this scene, who can place or remove Robin in relationship to her own body. By extension, the reader's role is implicated in the relationship of power and subjectivity: as spectator, the reader joins in with the fetishization of Robin as a non-temporal and idealized figure, but she also has the potential (and feminist responsibility) to recognize that fetishization as manipulative—the recognition (like the "event" discussed in this dissertation's Introduction) which initiates a feminist spectator.

The construction of Robin as "'picture' forever arranged" in these scenes is an example of the ekphrastic mode that Brian Glavey argues characterizes Barnes's queer narrative form. Updating Joseph Frank's spatial-form theory, Glavey argues that "queer

118 Barnes's 1930 research proposal focused on "pre-war conditions, intrigues and relations then existing between the Jews and the Court, tracing the interweaving between the two" (Barnes, qtd. in Trubowitz 311). See Monika Kaup's discussion of Barnes's fascination with baroque texts in *Neobaroque and the Americas*.

ekphrasis” describes the novel’s overall structural style: it suspends bodies as aesthetic figures, as captured in a narrative arrangement that objectifies and stereotypes them but also preserves their “anonymity” and “autonomy,” thus preserving their otherness. In the case of Robin in particular, Glavey notes that the aesthetic mode “introduces a temporal disjunction that prevents an identity from ever cohering” and that “Robin exemplifies this disjunction” (Glavey 756). Duality of movement and stasis is key to queer ekphrasis, “a tense and trembling vibration between motion and stasis that aestheticizes moments of loss and withdrawal” (750). In fact, Glavey argues that the “dialectic quality of such an aesthetic” has an effect which “fetishizes even as it affords power and authority” (752). Glavey’s aesthetic and narrative argument thus addresses the sexual-spatial form that Barnes’s queer cosmopolitanism produces. In Glavey’s consideration of the queer ekphrasis’s maintenance of authority, however, I see more ambiguity: is Robin *afforded* authority in these scenes, as Glavey suggests? Who has the authority to afford authority? In my reading, Barnes’s ekphrastic narrative aesthetic renders authority performative and negotiable only to the degree that a spectator (reader) can participate (or not) in the fetishization of Robin. As I will suggest below, it is, rather, when Robin (or other figures) can break free from or undermine the ekphrastic mode (and the authority of a narrator’s control) that the narrative form creates space for “other” power. The baroque bodies negotiate power with the text and with a reader.

In Barnes’s rendering of Robin, some potential for negotiation within, and away from, the ekphrastic form comes from comparisons to animals: the introduction of the animal to Robin’s descriptions produces a potential line of flight from her frozen position as feminine ideal. At first, however, the animal references contribute to the exclusion of

Robin from classical and narrative authority. When Robin is described as “beast turning human” (41), the narrative fixes her primitive “origins” within the exclusionary and fetishizing construction of her while also setting off a dialectical movement (beast/human), which Glavey defines as essential to the ekphrastic form of the narrative. A few pages later the narrator suggests that even when Robin is removed from her Rousseau tableau, she “carried the quality of the ‘way back’ as animals do” (N 44), preserving the primitiveness that partly constructs her, but also introducing the possibility of mobility—so key for interwar cosmopolitan lesbians and other disaffiliated figures.

In this way, Robin’s “animal” mobility may have more in common with Nikka as a primitive and baroque body than with Nora, whose ekphrastic narrative suspension preserves a narrator potential—and who is thus poised to gain authority over the narrative. The narrator describes Nora:

By temperament Nora was an early Christian; she believed the word. There is a gap in ‘world pain’ through which the singular falls continually and forever; a body falling in observable space, deprived of the privacy of disappearance; as if privacy, moving relentlessly away, by the very sustaining power of its withdrawal kept the body eternally moving downward, but in one place, and perpetually before the eye. Such a singular was Nora. There was some derangement in her equilibrium that kept her immune from her own descent. (56-7)

This passage inscribes Glavey’s definition of queer ekphrasis into the narrative performance of it. Nora, as a queer figure (“a singular”), is suspended in a fall (the queer ekphrastic tension of movement and stasis) and cannot escape spectatorship. Nora is also stuck in the “gap” between the words in the term “world pain”: not recognizable as part of the “world”—because she is a queer woman—and at the same time not able to articulate “pain” because of her lack of narrative authority. Nora, like Robin, is held outside of a classical sense of authorial narrative: they both can be used to consolidate the

subjecthood (or blood line, or nationalist authority) of another, but they are not permitted within the traditional grammatical terms of the narrative, nor do they have control over them.

Nora is also unlike Robin, however, because she is afforded an interrogative voice within the narrative: in fact, her primary narrative function (besides plot) is to ask the questions that sustain the narrative. Her entrance into the narrative, for example, is with a question aimed at Dr. Matthew O'Connor and Felix Volkbein, whom she overhears talking at a carnival after-party: "Are you both really saying what you mean, or are you just talking?" (21). When she is later (properly) introduced to the narrative by the authoritative narrator it is with the above pseudo-ekphrastic description of being caught in a freefall. I call this a "pseudo" ekphrastic description because, unlike Robin's ekphrastic narrative fully-formed-birth in the jungle-hotel room, the passage isn't a specular description of Nora's body but rather a narrative explanation of her suspended narrative (and sexual-spatial) state.

The combination of this pseudo-ekphrastic introduction with her interrogative narrative role positions Nora not only suspended in the gap between the words "world pain" but also suspended somewhere between the narrative discourse and its story. She remains just beyond the role of the narrator, both prompting and receiving the bulk of the narrative through her interactions with O'Connor. The question with which she enters the narrative therefore performatively announces Nora's *adjacency* to the narrative, which positions her as neither object nor author of the narrative. In this sense, Nora can also be considered a baroque figure, exceeding/excluded from both objectivity and subjectivity,

both inside and outside of the narrative (thus initiating the feminist baroque *haunting* described in this dissertation's Introduction).

As part of her interrogative role in the narrative, she provides the comment that triggers one of the doctor's wartime anecdotes. Matthew O'Connor's role in the narrative is largely to suspend whatever plot there might be and offer narrative distractions—his own opinions of and personal experiences that may or may not relate to others. In a different way but to a similar effect as Woolf's metonymical sentence about violence at the center of the English manor, O'Connor's contributions to the narrative ensure its indirect and metonymical movement—offering tangents and lateral movement that distracts from, but also points to other possible meanings, in a baroque narrative structure. In the case of this war anecdote, O'Connor responds to a comment Nora makes while listening in on O'Connor's conversation with Felix at the after-party. Nora suggests that the doctor “argue[s] about sorrow and confusion too easily” (25). It is this comment that leads into his war anecdote about a cow in a bomb shelter.

Beginning with the non sequitur “I was in a war once” (25), O'Connor describes a dark night of being shelled in Brittany, when an “old Breton” takes her cow with her into the shelter, where O'Connor and others wait out the bombing.¹¹⁹ Though on the surface the anecdote seems unconnected to the narrative, O'Connor offers a thesis in response to Nora's objection, which the war anecdote develops into a proof. O'Connor asserts: “There is no pure sorrow. Why? It is bedfellow to lungs, lights, guts and gall!” (25). Thus the phrase “I was in a war once myself,” which introduces the anecdote and masquerades as a non sequitur, actually connects the embedded story to the central problem of the

¹¹⁹ It is hard not to think that Barnes's phrase “old Breton” might refer sardonically to André Breton as well, standing in the text as a satirical jab at Breton's masculinity and relevancy.

novel: how to represent sorrow and confusion. O'Connor isolates the problem with his thesis: there is no such thing as "pure sorrow" because it is inextricable from embodiment and materiality, therefore any attempts at isolating sorrow as an abstraction or an idealized form are bound to fail—a meta-commentary on the narrative he is bound up in.

To illustrate this thesis, the doctor first establishes the idea of fear in a classical (clichéd and abstracted) sense: "the bombs began tearing the heart out of you, so that you began to think of all the majesty in the world that you would not be able to think of in a minute" (25). The equivalent to the clichés "my life flashed before my eyes" or "my heart sank," these phrases are further abstracted by using the second person, transforming the specific and historical event into a universal experience the reading subject ("you") is meant to absorb and totalize. The account shifts into sensory and physical terms, however, as the doctor begins to remember "scrambling for the cellar" and hearing the "whisper" of the Dubliner desperately praying (25-6). The doctor's encounter in the cellar with the "poor beast trembling on her four legs" startles him into realizing "that the tragedy of the beast can be two legs more awful than a man's" (26):

She was softly dropping her dung at the far end where the thin Celtic voice kept coming up saying, 'Glory be to Jesus!' and I said to myself, 'Can't the morning come now, so I can see what my face is mixed up with?' At that a flash of lightning went by and I saw the cow turning her head straight back so her horns made two moons against her shoulders, the tears soused all over her great black eyes. [...] I put my hand on the poor bitch of a cow and her hide was running water under my hand, like water tumbling down from Lahore, jerking against my hand as if she wanted to go, standing still in one spot; and I thought, there are directions and speeds that no one has calculated, for believe it or not that cow had gone somewhere very fast that we didn't know of, and yet was still standing there. (26)¹²⁰

¹²⁰ The reference to Lahore in this description could be adding another layer of animal-human relationship significance by invoking the sacred cow of the Hindu tradition. To further complicate the allusions in this passage, the colonial references—to Ireland and India—emphasize the inside-outside paradox of bare life, for colonies and the colonized are defined in terms of a state of exception. The blending of bodies and politics, of species and coloniality, within the context of world war in this scene deepens the text's critique

That the scene is described as partially seen and not seen—that the doctor was prevented from full view of the cow in the cellar because it was dark and they were in blackout during the bombardment—is an important contrast to the ekphrastic, idealized scenes that introduce characters in the novel’s primary Parisian postwar setting. While the introduction of Robin unfolds like a painting or a tableau, genres dependent on the specular regime, this war anecdote makes its way into the narrative via darkness, sounds, and smells. The tremoring of the cow’s hide can only be communicated via touch, and the doctor can only describe it as unfixable as running water. Where Robin and Nora are placed outside of time by the ekphrastic narrative construction, the doctor’s own conceptions of time and space are challenged by his sense that the cow’s trembling body, responding with fear to the sounds and sensations of dropping bombs, exceeds the “calculated” limits of knowledge. Where the ekphrastic scenes freeze and therefore control time and the figures described within it, here, the animal defies time by moving beyond its limits, flipping the alienating effect back onto the observer.

Such destabilization continues to undermine the spectator’s subject position, who is also the substitute narrator for this anecdote. This means that the baroque body of the bombed animal—a body which is contained by violence but also resisting that containment by articulating fear through excrement—disturbs and resists some of the authority of the narrator. The bombardment has brought O’Connor and the others into intimate proximity with the animal, upturning standard order and separation of species and spaces: the doctor’s wish to “see what my face is mixed up with” betrays a kind of

of a colonial-patriarchal tradition of authorship/authoritarianism. The many allusions in this scene, therefore, create a *mise en abyme* effect about coloniality and subjectivation. Many thanks to Karen Kurczynski for pointing me in the right direction regarding the allusion to Lahore.

identity crisis for O'Connor who suspects that his body, and therefore his subjecthood, is penetrated and changed, not only by fear but by other bodies. Again, in stark contrast to the idealized description of Robin, who is described poetically as "beast turning human" in order to fix her as an idea and a symbol of the primitive within the narrative, here O'Connor experiences ontological insecurity in the bomb shelter where human and beast might actually blend beyond distinction—whether because of the disorder of the blackout and fear-filled shelter, or because of the possibility that a bomb blast will physically mix their blood and flesh in its wake. This translates the "threat" presented in the earlier ekphrastic scenes—the imagined threat that the *idea* of Robin Vote represents to the (male) rational subject—from an epistemological threat that heightens the difference between object and subject, to an existential threat of physical collapse and obliteration of both object and subject.

Similarly, another anecdote focusing on animal embodiment of wartime violence and trauma can be analyzed for its metonymical or indirect construction of significance. The second anecdote comes in the "Where the Tree Falls" chapter, when Felix seeks the doctor out to say goodbye because, having accepted that Robin will not be returning to him, he's made the decision to take their son back to Austria.¹²¹ The doctor responds to Felix's self-pitying musings and his question, "why did she marry me?" with the story of a horse after a bombing:

"Take the case of the horse who knew too much," said the doctor, "looking between the branches in the morning, cypress or hemlock. She was in mourning for something taken away from her in a bombardment in the war—by the way she stood, that something lay between her hooves—she stirred no branch, though her hide was a river of sorrow; she was damned to her hocks, where the grass came

¹²¹ Which seems like a very bad idea for a family of Jewish descent in the 1930s, and this is an irony that Barnes undoubtedly incorporated on purpose to trap Felix in his history of persecution.

waving up softly. Her eyelashes were gray-black, like the eyelashes of a nigger, and at her buttocks' soft centre a pulse throbbed like a fiddle." (121)

The horse in the doctor's story appears to have just had a miscarriage brought on by the bombing. Where a newborn foal should be is an absence. Just prior to this exchange, Felix described Robin in terms of absence: when she comes into a room, he says, everyone goes silent "because they are looking for someone who is not there" (120). Felix seems to acknowledge his misapprehension of Robin as a vehicle for his own immortality, that her (projected) primitiveness, which he describes in this exchange as her "one sole condition," attracted him because of its combination of simplicity and infiniteness. Felix therefore projects onto Robin an idea of primitiveness—cultural and historical exclusion—that relies on both absence and infinity, and though he seems to be admitting to his own mistakes in this scene, he still does not recognize that the inscrutable power he has attributed to Robin is something he himself has created. In another sense, Felix is projecting onto Robin a kind of essentialism that he has tried to escape for himself by "turning Christian." Just as his attraction to the circus initiates a paradox of fetishization and hate that is ultimately directed at himself, Felix's pursuit of the *idea* of Robin as an object that might complete and legitimate him performs its own kind of disqualification of himself, and it pushes Robin away. A double loss is thus conveyed in this scene: Felix's loss of Robin, as well as Felix's loss of apprehension regarding his own construction (through pursuit) of loss.

Felix's projection of loss is contrasted in the doctor's parable, however, because the horse "knew too much" – knew, we assume, the implications of the "absence": a dead

body.¹²² She is not engaged in a search for or a pursuit of what she has lost but is, rather, mourning the dead body at her feet. The stillness of the animal's body standing frozen above a bloody absence is contrasted by her trembling hide which articulates her "sorrow" in an embodied way. If the horse can be read in terms of Felix, then she is a foil for him: where Felix is caught inside a double-bind of loss, preventing his ability to move beyond it, the horse stands astride her loss, knowing that both her loss (the dead foal) and the cause of the loss (the bombs that drop from the sky) are out of her control, beyond the limitations of her body and yet affecting it.

Julie Goodspeed-Chadwick, writing about Barnes's coding of war trauma in *Nightwood*, suggests that "The horse's embodied state protests her war knowledge, and Barnes fleshes out the horse's situation in embodied language" (47-8). The phrase "war knowledge" helps to identify the source of the doctor's claim that the horse "knew too much." It is knowledge of war which causes the horse's mourning, an *embodied knowledge* that manifests as a trembling body and eyes turned upward to the sky. Importantly, the horse's corporeality exceeds the expectations of the narrative gaze, which registers the horse's movement even though it stands still, just as O'Connor was confounded by the cow's movement under her hide in the bomb shelter. As an inversion of the representations of Robin or Nora as frozen outside time, as fixed in the a narrative in which they are seen rather heard, and as excluded from history, the horse, as Goodspeed-Chadwick puts it, "protests" her historical exclusion by looking up to the sky through the branches of the trees, identifying the cause of her loss as the bombs dropping

¹²² This construction of "too much" recalls the "too clear form of the ruin" in Bowen's *The Last September* and performs the same function of calling attention to its provocative ambiguity and *excess*.

from the sky. Her trembling body and her “damned to her hocks” backside, where she is probably bloody from the stillbirth, therefore *write back* to the violence of war.

Furthermore, the contrast between the horse’s embodied apprehension of war and Felix’s narrated *misapprehension* upsets the expectations for a rational/primitive split. Goodspeed-Chadwick argues that the feminized, animal body embodies a particular experience of (war) trauma which cannot be articulated in language, and she suggests that this comments on “the lack of opportunities for female bodies to signify in texts meaningfully” (45). This alternative signification glimpsed in the trembling body of the horse, and the apparent difficulty of the feminine-primitive to articulate in a patriarchal-normative tradition of “rational” language is reinforced by Felix’s inability (or refusal) to understand the doctor’s story.¹²³ The narrative thus participates in a submersion of “other” signification, but in calling attention to its own hierarchical and erasing maneuvers, the text facilitates recognition of what I call a “conspiracy” between text and reader. Like a baroque body itself, the text both performs and resists the seductions, illusions, and inequality of hierarchical structures.

The war scenes that depict animal bodies traumatized by and responding to man-made catastrophic violence disturb the narrative contract implied in the ekphrastic structure of the rest of the narrative. The ekphrastic structure promises a removal of the observed object from history, because exclusion from history, time, and space is required in order to freeze an image (an image stopped “between uncertainties,” as Felix explains

123 Felix ignores the doctor’s story of the horse: rather than making any comment on it, he changes the topic to mention an encounter with Jenny Petherbridge, Robin’s lover after Robin leaves Nora, who is also left by Robin. Metonymically, the shift to Jenny after this horse parable reveals something about Jenny’s relationship with Robin, as well as revealing something of Felix’s understanding of that relationship. Exploring this subsequent connection is beyond the scope of the current essay, however.

to the doctor) at the same time that it is being constructed by the conspiracy between spectator-reader and narrator (119). Where the (queer) object of (queer) ekphrasis is sealed off from (normative) reality and also from the spectator—kept tantalizingly at arm’s length, so that there is a fetishized threat, but no actual penetration—the corporeality of the animals in the war anecdotes seep fluids like tears and blood which violate the spectator-reader’s narrative space. Both types of figures, the idealized feminine and the abused animal, are kept at a distance by the authoritative narrator, suspended by desire and violence. But the seam in the narrative which opens when O’Connor’s anecdotal tangents introduce uncertainty—by extending the authorial reach—allows for a different kind of movement within the narrative by the animals overwhelmed by war trauma. The silent or repressed trauma of sexual violence or indirect war trauma which might trap Robin and Nora (or Felix, in a different sense) is articulated by the animals’ expressions of fear and mourning through their skin.

This comparison of ekphrastic descriptions and anecdotal narrative tangents demonstrates differential arrangements of desire and violence that both objectify and harm vulnerable bodies. These contrasting narrative forms overlap, however, in the representation of Nikka, the tattooed circus performer. Doctor O’Connor provides a description of Nikka from memory, offering an extended ekphrastic description of his tattooed body. Nikka is therefore described in a specular frame that idealizes and traps him as a narrative fetish, and in an anecdotal tangent that removes his embodied potential from the direct gaze of the text. The description—which I will quote in its entirety—therefore serves as a transitional or hybrid form between the ideal and the embodied (or classical and baroque) modes of signification:

Once the doctor had his audience [...] nothing could stop him. He merely turned his large eyes upon her [Frau Mann] and having done so noticed her and her attire for the first time, which, bringing suddenly to his mind something forgotten but comparable, sent him into a burst of laughter, exclaiming: “Well, but God works in mysterious ways to bring things up in my mind! Now I am thinking of Nikka, the nigger who used to fight the bear in the Cirque de Paris. There he was, crouching all over the arena without a stitch on, except an ill-concealed loin-cloth all abulge as if with a deep-sea catch, tattooed from head to heel with all the *ameublement* of depravity! Garlanded with rosebuds and hackwork of the devil—was he a sight to see! Though he couldn’t have done a thing (and I know what I am talking about in spite of all that has been said about the black boys) if you had stood him in a gig-mill for a week, though (it’s said) at a stretch it spelled Desdemona. Well then, over his belly was an angel from Chartres; on each buttock, half public, half private, a quotation from the book of magic, a confirmation of the Jansenist theory, I’m sorry to say and here to say it. Across his knees, I give you my word, ‘I’ on one and on the other, ‘can,’ put those together! Across his chest, beneath a beautiful caravel in full sail, two clasped hands, the wrist bones fretted with point lace. On each bosom an arrow-speared heart, each with different initials but with equal drops of blood; and running into the arm-pit, all down one side, the word said by Prince Arthur Tudor, son of King Henry the Seventh, when on his bridal night he called for a goblet of water (or was it water?). His Chamberlain, wondering at the cause of such drought, remarked on it and was answered in one word so wholly epigrammatic and in no way befitting the great and noble British Empire that he was brought up with a start, and that is all we will ever know of it, unless,” said the doctor, striking his hand on his hip, “you are as good at guessing as Tiny M’Caffery.” (Barnes 18-20).

“And the legs?” Felix asked uncomfortably.

“The legs,” said Doctor O’Connor, “were devoted entirely to vine work, topped by the swart rambler rose copied from the coping of the Hamburg house of Rothschild. Over his dos, believe it or not and I shouldn’t, a terse account in early monkish script—called by some people indecent, by others Gothic—of the really deplorable condition of Paris before hygiene was introduced, and nature had its way up to the knees. And just above what you mustn’t mention, a bird flew carrying a streamer on which was incised, ‘Garde tout!’ I asked him why all this barbarity; he answered he loved beauty and would have it about him.” (Barnes 20).

Because O’Connor describes Nikka in one of his narrative tangents, rather than Nikka

being inscribed into the narrative by the narrator as an idea, as Robin and Nora are

introduced, Nikka and his narrative space are parallel to the animal descriptions in

O’Connor’s war anecdotes. Given the history of combining animal imagery and rhetoric

with the racialization of bodies, especially in the justification of colonization and slave labor, Barnes's reincorporation of these racist and colonizing tropes into her aesthetic experiments should be recognized as racial-temporalizing, as constituting a primitivism in order to configure her sexual-spatial text. Barnes's own recourse to racial stereotyping is evident in her personal letters and notes (references to the Steins include clichés about money, greed, and Jewishness; and she uses the “n” word to distinguish between the types of music and cafes she has been to in Paris),¹²⁴ so it is not unlikely that she, at some conscious level, constructs Nikka as a transitional beast-human figure, making use of a tradition of racial marginalization, a tradition which finds new power and amplification in an interwar Europe being transformed by fascist propaganda.

There is also a kind of ekphrastic suspension—and therefore narrative fetishization—of Nikka, however. Nikka's racialized body is interpellated as sex object, and therefore feminized in its vulnerability to the gaze; yet his body is also inscribed with a sense of chaos lurking just under the skin, which echoes the descriptions of agitated—and *agitating*—animals elsewhere in the narrative. The cultural markings that adorn Nikka's skin may even function as a distraction from (the threat of) the body underneath. Nikka therefore represents the split between two discourses: while the tattoos across his skin confirm the narratives of Western, white, and patriarchal containment of black bodies for exploited labor, their attachment to the body of Nikka threatens their efficacy, for the body which can wrestle bears and forego sex with white women inverts the cultural inscriptions of primitive innocence and sexual potency.¹²⁵ I agree with Jane

¹²⁴ See Barnes's *Collected Poems: With Notes Toward the Memoirs*.

¹²⁵ The references O'Connor makes to the gig-mill and to his defiance of the stereotype about “black boys” suggests that Nikka is not interested in sex with white women, despite the significance of the word

Marcus and Laura Winkiel, who separately argue that the tattoos perform a defiance of Western-patriarchal coding, but I also heed Karen Kaivola's reminder that Nikka's otherness remains essentialized in a way that Robin's or Nora's otherness is not. Nikka's function in the text straddles the physical and the abstract. So while Nikka's tattoos are a "sight to see" (N 19), and are fixed in the narrative by this ekphrastic mode, Nikka's body also moves beyond the ekphrastic mode, "crouching all over the arena," and rippling underneath the tattoos, exceeding the narrative's gaze, like the animals in O'Connors anecdotes about war trauma.

The tattoos on Nikka's body also directly challenge the ekphrastic representation of Robin. The mix of imagery such as vines and birds (which recalls Robin's hotel room), juxtaposed with the Caravel (a slave ship, as Winkiel points out), which is literally underscored by gothic script detailing the pre-sewers conditions of Paris, comments directly on Robin's ekphrastic narrative introduction. Robin is suspended as an idealized fetish that serves as fertile ground from which the modern, narrative subject can grow his sense of self, and this emplacement of Robin in the narrative frame is staged in a way that she can be placed into the scene, or removed from it, as needed. Nikka's tattoos, on the other hand, are inseparable from his body, and they *write back* to the narrative's production of a jungle-within-civilization. The tattoos' counter-narrative exposes the modern (white Western) subject (identified with the ship and the laced hands clasped underneath) as responsible for producing the hygienic nightmare of Paris. If Robin offers a kind of unwritten future that can be projected onto, Nikka offers quite the opposite: a future overburdened with the past. As a baroque body, Nikka's figuration in the text not

"Desdemona" tattooed on his penis – the name of the white woman who marries the African Moor in Shakespeare's *Othello*.

only demonstrates the embodied inscription of authority and violence, but also *overwrites* that authority via his baroque excess: he overwhelms senses and the narrative structure.

Robin and Nora consolidate the ideal, imaginary, feminine facilitators of masculine (re)production. On the other hand, the narrative tangents—what seem at first to be excessive and excluded from the primary narrative—reintroduce embodiment, via the animals and Nikka, and suggest an alternative articulation of modern trauma that cannot be moralized or valorized within dominant, patriarchal narratives of war or Enlightenment progress, nor can their articulations of fear, pain and sorrow be *unfelt*. The animal bodies' excretions of tears, excrement, and blood violate sensibilities and prevent them from being incorporated as "decoration" or moral symbols for war narratives. In contrast with the frozen and idealized representations of Robin and Nora in the narrative, the animals' baroque bodies remind a spectator-reader of vulnerability without fetishizing that vulnerability. Nikka becomes perhaps the most crucial baroque body in Barnes's text because he reunites the embodied and fetishized others of modernity while demonstrating a capacity to signify resistance from within the constraints of dominating narratives.

Alice Kaplan explains that fascist aestheticism erases "the actual uses" of weapons that destroy, converting potential and actual violence into objects of beauty, and "An aesthetic of 'art for art' applied to the concept of war gives both art for war (pro-militaristic art) and, much more crucially, [brings the] 'outside' [art in], war for the sake of art, war as art" (28-29). Barnes's experimental text pushes authoritative forms—of art—to their limits, tracing their centripetal and centrifugal power to scatter and to entrap. Barnes facilitates a counter-fascism by offering the un-fetishized, un-aestheticized animals in war in the Doctor's war anecdotes; just as important is that Barnes manages to

historicize and materialize the creative process itself, emphasizing the historical and biological implications of “art” through Frau Mann’s painful performativity—the “organism struggling to survive in an alien element”—and Nikka’s tattooed and black skin.

The Art of Truth: beast turning human turning beast turning . . .

Barnes once commented that *Nightwood* causes readers so much difficulty “because it is such a new kind of writing, it makes the reader crazy” (qtd. in Plumb 158). This “new kind of writing” finds its culmination in an ending which has baffled readers and critics. T.S. Eliot, in his editorial capacity, recommended that Barnes cut the final chapter altogether because he considered it “superfluous” and an “anticlimax” to the Doctor’s last words (qtd. in Plumb 153-54). Eliot’s language uncannily echoes the “surplus women” discourses described in the Introduction of this dissertation, suggesting that Barnes’s final chapter represents to Eliot a kind of threat to traditional order and power. He is perhaps not wrong. What is remarkable and unsettling in the closing chapter is the narrative’s performative collapse under the strain of competing voices and aesthetic visions, and yet the collapse resonates not as an *ending* but as an alternative way of communicating and of *being*. The final chapter brings the novel’s themes to a climactic, poignant head as it makes final comment on both the work and effects of the artistic process, with particular interest in the stakes of modernism.

The novel’s short final chapter, “The Possessed,” depicts an ambiguous reunion between Nora and Robin on Nora’s property in New York. Having left Paris and gone to New York with Jenny Petherbridge, Robin leaves Jenny to wander towards Nora, like a lost dog finding its way home. The language of the final chapter is the most direct and the

least adorned—with Doctor Matthew O'Connor and his dominating, wandering monologues notably gone from the narrative—and yet the chapter leaves the novel more open than closed. Robin finds her way to an old chapel on Nora's property where Nora's dog eventually finds her. Turning to the beast, Robin inexplicably begins to act like a dog, bending down to the ground to play with it on her hands and knees, mimicking its whines and barks, which frightens the dog. She finally exhausts herself and lies down on the floor to weep, the dog giving up as well and laying its head on her legs. Many readers have suggested that Robin's play with the dog becomes sexual, and Barnes both balked at that idea and left it open as a possibility.¹²⁶ Nora, coming upon the scene just as Robin bends to the floor with the dog, falls into the doorjamb, presumably collapsing to the floor—though whether she witnesses all of Robin's tormented play is unclear, as the narrative voice never returns to Nora's perspective. Instead, the novel closes with Robin weeping, and the dog exhausted.

Many critics note the conclusion's retreat from linguistic signification, its abandonment of human language, and its embrace, instead, of an alternative form of communication. For example, Bonnie Kime Scott writes, "The extended action of dog and woman are suggestive of ritual healing. . . . There is plenty of aural expression, but not through words (*Refiguring Modernism* 117). And Donna Gerstenberger sees an "escape [of] the nexus of patriarchy, epistemology, and the idea of the progressive nature and form of knowledge by simply refusing the legitimacy of the claims made for the riddle exchange, thereby deconstructing a central aspect of traditional narrative and relentlessly interrogating readerly expectations" (36). Considering the argument I have

¹²⁶ Phillip Herring has documented Barnes's rejection of the interpretation ("Djuna Barnes and Thelma Wood" 16-17), but Plumb records Barnes's more open approach to reader interpretation (153).

presented here regarding the narrative's positioning of Robin as an ideal, ekphrastic figure trapped within the narrative but outside of time and space, I suggest that Robin's actions with the dog *exceed* or *escape* even the forms of ritual; in the end, she literally and figuratively embraces the animal: she realizes embodied play *within* time and space rather than a spiritual or mindful control of—and therefore objective separation from—time and space. The “healing” that Robin may experience, evidenced most when she gives up and lies on the floor weeping, comes not from a substitution of symbolic meaning for pain, but from *folding herself into* the pain.

Robin's enigmatic actions at the end are indeed “superfluous,” then, because Robin rejects the limiting categories that her pursuers have designated for her: as object of desire, as vehicle for salvation/reproduction, as visual or symbolic container for an authoritarian imaginary. Her actions also perform ambiguously within the modernist narrative that represents her, thus facilitating an internal resistance to that modernist project. In both cases, Nora is devastated by these actions and these possibilities. Nora, though similarly suspended by the narrative's authoritative discourse, has nevertheless attempted throughout the novel to work herself into that narrative authority: by asking the questions of Doctor O'Connor which sustain the narrative, and by trying to normalize her queer relationship with Robin by placing her in domestic spaces and roles. Robin's embodied performance in this final scene is therefore a radical rejection of Nora's sense of narrative duty as well as the reader's expectations for authoritative closure (as Eliot's protestations imply).

Crucially, Robin's actions at the end of the novel reverse the stated claim by the narrative early on that Robin was “beast turning human.” In the final chapter, Robin is

human-turning-beast, and the story implies that Nora's own (narrative) pursuit of her has driven Robin to this end. Thus, the narrative demonstrates how essentialism is a projected violence (a particular point of view we can call classical authority) rather than a fixed and inherent quality. But the transformations happening both within the story and at the narrative level go even further than this because the artistic process, and the aesthetic experience, that Barnes pursues and represents in *Nightwood* is not uni-directional nor is it predictable. Like Nikka's tattoos which *write back* to the violent and destructive histories which ultimately shape his own body as well as the European cities his circus tours through, the written surface is also skin which envelops and *feels*. Mieke Bal speaks to this baroque capability of transforming represented surface into *skin* when she argues that the "materialism of the [baroque] fold entails the involvement of the subject within the material experience, thus turning surface into skin" (*Quoting Caravaggio* 30). And the result is something other than (or "beyond") either objectivism or subjectivism:

It is fundamentally different from either an objectivism that posits the truth of interpretation, thus occluding its subject and its temporality, or a subjectivism that empowers the individual reader but has no potential whatsoever to generalize and hence no relevance. Nor does [baroque materialism] represent the "middle road" between the two extremes. (36)

Nikka's skin, Robin's play, and Barnes's narrative perform like a baroque fold to transform the reading experience itself into an experience of both vulnerability and culpability. And in doing so, Barnes's feminist baroque experiment not only makes clearer the contingency, and the risky beauty, of intersubjectivity, but it also facilitates the reading experience as an occasion for revelatory intersubjectivity.

The next and final chapter of this dissertation will explore the ways that Jean Rhys incorporates the risk of intersubjectivity into her final interwar novel as both thematic and textual elements.

CHAPTER 4

BAROQUE VOIDS IN JEAN RHY'S *GOOD MORNING, MIDNIGHT*

"You are walking along a road peacefully. You trip. You fall into blackness. That's the past—or perhaps the future. And you know that there is no past, no future, there is only this blackness, changing faintly, slowly, but always the same" (Rhys GMM 450)

"The moment of truth when the baroque Subject no longer escapes from what he flees: la nada, il niente, nothingness. An apocalyptic, destructive void where the world and the self constantly risk being shattered, breaking all 'illusion'" (Buci-Glucksmann Madness of Vision: On Baroque Aesthetics 85-86).

In an 1893 diary entry, André Gide introduced the concept we now understand as *mise en abyme* ("mettre en abyme"), a narrative structure and aesthetic effect.¹²⁷ He described an image embedded within another image that reflected itself, which would create a particular relationship between part and whole of an aesthetic work. He turned to Baroque examples to further describe this aesthetic effect, such as Velasquez's painting *Las Meninas*, which includes a mirror image of the painter himself embedded within the composition—in the very act of painting the scene. Gide also referred to Shakespeare's play-within-play motif, which, we should remember, is related to the *mise en abyme* effect that Woolf's induction novel creates. As an aesthetic technique, it signals and produces self-reflexiveness, not only between the artist and his or her work, but also in

¹²⁷ See Lucien Dällenbach's *The Mirror in the Text*, for a thorough discussion of Gide's theorization of *mise en abyme* from Baroque sources, as well as his development of the effect in his narrative experiments. See also Hawcroft, "Gide's *Corydon*, 'Mise en Abyme' and Autobiographical Fiction," and Setterfield's "Mise en Abyme, Retroaction, and Autobiography in André Gide's *Tentative Amoureuse*."

the relationship of the spectator to the work, and therefore the concept has been generally associated with postmodern aesthetics.¹²⁸ In my rereading of women's experimental interwar texts in terms of the critical historiography of the baroque at the turn of the twentieth-century, however, I argue that Rhys's 1939 novel, *Good Morning, Midnight*, can be analyzed in terms of this baroque-derived formal idea. Thus, while all the texts in this study make use of a feminist baroque *mise en abyme* effect, I argue in this chapter that Rhys's novel relies on that form as an overall structural device to convey its themes and aesthetic effects. In *Good Morning, Midnight*, characters, narrative voice, and the overall narrative structure can be considered as *mise en abyme*.

I connect the postmodern and poststructuralist conceptions of *mise en abyme* to its baroque capability and modernist context. More specifically, I argue that *mise en abyme* in Rhys's text establishes an interplay between proliferation and voids—two forms significant in baroque aesthetics—which shapes Sasha Jansen's interwar memories and narrative. It also facilitates a distinct part-to-whole effect that corresponds to the Baroque principle of "Unity"—an aestheticization of a contingent constellation or cosmos—as described by Heinrich Wölfflin in his 1915 *Principles of Art History*.¹²⁹ Importantly,

128 Indeed, as an aesthetic term it was only established in 1950 by the French critic Claude Magny who recognized the resonances between Gide's 1893 diary description and his 1925 novel *The Counterfeiters*, and she theorized that Gide's part-to-whole aesthetic ambition was to create a work of art that was open and inexhaustible—an aesthetic description very much in line with neobaroque aesthetics. This idea was reconsidered in the 1970s by Lucien Dällenbach who emphasized the internal mirror effect within a narrative text. Our understanding of Gide's *mise en abyme* is critically routed through Magny and Dällenbach, who were primarily concerned with the development of the modern and postmodern French novel, the *nouveau roman*. See Setterfield (1998) and Hawcroft (1994) for more discussion. It should not go unnoticed, however, that Gide's aesthetic influences are from the historical Baroque period, and his interests coincide with the re-popularization of Baroque aesthetics at the turn of the twentieth century as discussing in this study's Introduction.

129 See the Introduction to this dissertation for more discussion of Wölfflin's principles of Baroque aesthetics—especially footnote 41, which lists the five principles that contrast baroque forms with classical forms.

Rhys's construction of a feminist baroque *mise en abyme* is distinguishable from other kinds that might be associated with Gide or Shakespeare. Rather than effecting a kind of self-indulgence which fortifies a male artist or authoritative subject, Rhys's *mise en abyme* ultimately makes fun of herself while also demonstrating that fortification is impossible, futile for her and other sexualized and colonial *others*. Degradation and fragmentation are multiplied in order to *extend* humiliation (across a cosmopolitan space, or across a colonial modernity). I call this an ironic *mise en abyme*. Furthermore, the text extends the text's *affect* to the reader in a kind of empathetic experience of discomfort and confusion via a narrative structure characterized by fragmentation, repetition, proliferation, and ellipses.

Rhys's last interwar novel—part of a so-called quartet of novels published between 1928 and 1939—replays the interwar experience of Sasha Jansen, the narrator and protagonist, via her traumatized, and therefore fragmented and looping, memory of 1920s and 1930s Paris. As others have noted, Rhys's text presents a cosmopolitan city filled with countless displaced, stateless figures who seem to be multiplying; and yet, like Sasha, they are also “placed under erasure” (Britzolakis 461), their histories and even names discarded and reinvented by necessity. They are the excess and excluded subjects of the cosmopolitan interwar period, and *Good Morning, Midnight* presents this impossible position as an aesthetic tension between proliferation and voids that permeates the narrative structure. The novel makes use of ellipses, for example—nearly every page in the text has them—to create “empty space” in the narrative itself, and at the same time the narrative is remarkable for its proliferating, repeated versions of Sasha Jansen. This chapter will look closely at how the narrative voice, particularly its tendency to split into

a double I/you voice, as well as the “doubling” of Sasha in the appearance of other “minor” characters, serves a *mise en abyme* effect by reflecting Sasha and her narrative back to her—and to the reader—thus creating a kind of abyss of proliferating minority.¹³⁰

The “Exhibition” that is both at the center and the margins of *Good Morning, Midnight* helps to frame and undermine the narrative in terms of its specific historical moment (the summer of 1937 in Paris) and its failures to sustain visions of a past or future at the same time. As I will describe below, the International Exhibition that was held in Paris in 1937 is symbolic of a European modernity extending its last grasp of control—through arts and technology, as well as with its symbolic gestures of political and military force—over a world about to erupt in another war. Rhys’s novel follows Sasha’s encounters with precarious figures like herself whose abilities to survive economic, racial, religious, and sexual violence will be strained further by the growing threat of ideological incommensurability represented in the clashing aesthetic (and political) styles of the Paris Exhibition.¹³¹ In that context, Sasha’s encounters with figures like Jewish refugees, a French proletarian girl working in a café, a gigolo and former

130 I use the term “minority” in this chapter in the sense that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari define it in *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which “minority” is defined in opposition to “majority,” much like the “baroque” is defined in opposition to “classical”; in fact, we can think of the minority/majority binary as another kind of representation of the baroque/classical opposition: “The opposition between minority and majority is not simply quantitative. Majority implies a constant, of expression or content, serving as a standard measure by which to evaluate it. ... It is obvious that 'man' holds the majority, even if he is less numerous than mosquitoes, children, women, blacks, peasants, homosexuals, etc. That is because he appears twice, once in the constant and again in the variable from which the constant is extracted. Majority assumes a state of power and domination, not the other way around. It assumes the standard measure, not the other way around” (105).

131 See Mark Antliff’s article in *Modernism/modernity* outlining the aesthetic and political clashes among the artists and politicians organizing the Exhibition. He documents a schism between the Popular Front coalition of artists and the fascist-sympathetic group associated with the journal *Combat*. Antliff identifies the formation of a French fascist culture that drew on Nietzschean theories and sought to identify a classical tradition of French aesthetics that were opposed to the Popular Front’s anti-fascist artistic movements. So, again, we see the importance of a cultural binary in the interwar period that pitted a fascist construction of “classicism” against non-classical forms.

Foreign Legionnaire of ambiguous origin, and an emaciated salesman dramatize the hopes and failures of a colonial-cosmopolitan space that can bring broken bodies and souls together, but cannot make them work as a whole. The novel's use of repetition, proliferation, and voids thus aestheticizes the psychic and political struggles of the colonial-cosmopolitan lives Sasha encounters in Paris in 1937.

The doubling and proliferation that is constructed at the levels of narrative voice and character is in aesthetic tension with not only the elliptical typography and narrative, but also with explicit references to voids and darkness within the narrator's story, like the one mentioned in the first epigraph above. As the second epigraph suggests, baroque aesthetics figure such voids as not only "risk" (and therefore as potential), but also, crucially, as *alternative* to the "illusion" of the represented or territorialized world. Baroque reality is a negotiation between excess and void, where the relationship between the two is not so much a difference of essence but of intensity and potential—and perhaps also, crucially, a difference of perspective. The baroque void represents a space of unterritorialized intersubjectivity and, in baroque aesthetics, is ripe for appropriation by the spectator.¹³²

Rhys's novel uses voids and repetition to organize a narrative that demonstrates how modern materialism and an Enlightenment ideology of progress entices and entraps:

¹³² Alain Badiou's theory of "event" is remarkably similar to the baroque dynamic of proliferation and void as I describe it here (and this can be assumed to be not a coincidence, but rather the result of the development of philosophy, including mathematics, from the Baroque period (e.g. Leibniz) through twentieth and twenty-first century French philosophy). In Badiou's 2005 argument, *Being and Event*, he describes a revolutionary moment or event as when the *excluded* become visible and thus disrupt normative time and thinking, or perception in general. In this reorganization of reality, the uncountable *multiplicity* of the excluded threaten the *one* of dominant ideology. Rhys's *mise en abyme* narrative facilitates a part-to-whole, excess-and-exclusion *aesthetic* relationship that Badiou later theorizes in terms of the potential and means for radical *political* interruption. It should also be noted that "unterritorialized intersubjectivity" describes the social-political *potential* of intersubjectivity before/between sedimented hierarchical subjectivication.

narrative, in this view, represents—*performs as*—ideology. But Rhys’s feminist baroque narrative also facilitates a self-conscious critique of that ideology. For example, while Sasha seems to be trapped in cycles of failure that mirror the precarity of other “losers” in interwar Paris, the risky, redolent *voids* that interrupt the text present alternative, though ambiguous, experiences within and beyond the interwar cosmopolitan landscape. Rhys’s interwar cosmopolitanism is not the queer modernity that Djuna Barnes represents—and creates—in her novel. But Rhys’s interwar cosmopolitanism is also a sexual-spatial suspension of scattered, disaffiliated and displaced figures whose various experiences of trauma due to war, poverty, and sexual violence lock them both in and out of a racialized and nationalized temporality. The invoked voids in Rhys’s text thus represent the affective and psychic experience of “exclusion” already introduced in this dissertation, the tradition of excluding the “excess” or “surplus” subjects of modernity from both historical and aesthetic coherence. Sasha Jansen and her proliferating “doubles” are also trafficked and transient figures whose vulnerability (because of disaffiliation) invites cruelty and exploitation. These social positions set up the conditions for (self-conscious) *haunting* within and in relation to the narrative form, as described in my dissertation’s Introduction.

I suggest that Rhys’s feminist baroque and modernist novel concretizes this historical and aesthetic exclusion in a way that ties her interwar psychic and existential precarity to a gendered and racialized *impossibility* of both history and future: “You are walking along a road peacefully. You trip. You fall into blackness. That’s the past—or perhaps the future. And you know that there is no past, no future, there is only this blackness, changing faintly, slowly, but always the same” (*GMM* 450). And yet, while

the “interwar” is recast here as a *privileged place* which Sasha cannot access, *Good Morning, Midnight* ends with an ambiguity that extends possibility rather than forecloses it. It is this re-reading of the enigmatic narrative ending that we will work our way towards in this chapter.

The “lavabo” and Narrative Entrapment

Evidence of a split self is offered throughout the novel, including the opening scene when the split subject (“I” and “you”) first takes shape and gets positioned as oppositional—to itself. While a narrating “I” is introduced right away in the text, a “she” soon enters the narrative in the next paragraphs as “a dark, thin woman of about forty, very well made-up” (347). This unnamed woman is the first “double” for the narrator, Sasha Jansen, sharing Sasha’s age and general appearance, and introduced here as an interlocutor to the narrative, literally interfering with the narrator’s “arranged [. . .] little life” (347). When Sasha (the “I” here) begins to cry while drinking a brandy-and-soda—revealing a vulnerability to both the effects of alcohol and the sad song “she” is humming—the unnamed woman scolds her: “‘Sometimes I’m just as unhappy as you are. But that’s not to say that I let everybody see it’” (347). Judith Kegan Gardiner points out that, in the exchange between the two women, it is difficult to distinguish which voice is speaking, causing some destabilization in the relationship between reader and text. According to Gardiner, the reader registers that narrative and social tradition has been violated, that the two women have crossed expected boundaries by forcing intimacy in a public space, and that this perhaps signals to the reader to be on guard: “Do we wish to rebuff this woman’s improper address? Do we resist the voice crossing the space between ourselves and the page as the narrator resists the woman at the next table?” (Gardiner

236). Gardiner thus identifies the way Rhys's textual performance draws the reader into the narrative, putting the reader at some of the same risk—of intimacy, of social trespass—that Sasha encounters. I suggest that another kind of *crossing* also takes place between these two figures, a textual confusion that facilitates more destabilization of the narrative.

When Sasha retreats from the woman and the music to the “lavabo. A familiar lavabo, and luckily empty” (347), she attempts to recover herself in the mirror. While the explicit use of the mirror here should already signal to the reader the potential for *mise en abyme*, Rhys's text produces a surprising variation on this idea of reflection by fracturing the narrative voice to perform as its own mirror, and by absorbing the other mirror—the “she” who might be a double for Sasha—into a construction of a split narrative voice. Furthermore, the political significance of the vocal fracturing and absorption recreates a sense of alienation that reflects Sasha's material and affective positionality. The “I” and “you” that emerge in the conversation Sasha has with herself in the mirror help Sasha, and the narrative, sustain a self-abusive orientation: external abuses, in other words, are absorbed in an extreme form of alienation in which the self becomes the *other* while remaining the *self*. Sasha's subject-split performs an excess/exclusion paradox at the character's psychological level, producing an internal fracture of self-abuse, as well as at the level of narrative voice.

I use the term *alienation* here in the sense that Umberto Eco clarifies in *The Open Work*: he reminds us that the preposition *to* rather than *from* is the more accurate usage with the word in its philosophical context. Using the term in this way “implies renouncing oneself *for* the sake of something else, abandoning oneself *to* some

extraneous power, becoming 'other' in something outside oneself, therefore ceasing to be an agent in order to be acted upon” (Eco 123, added emphasis). Sasha’s alienation *to* her own reflection in the mirror performs a staggering kind of *mise en abyme* that represents the process of alienation itself, and as such the text masters the part-to-whole aesthetic effect while also *othering* Sasha, rather than fortifying her authority. Furthermore, the function of this in Rhys’s text corresponds to Eco’s determination of political or radical art:

The artist who protests through form acts on two levels. On one, he rejects a formal system but does not obliterate it; rather, he transforms it from within by alienating himself in it and by exploiting its self-destructive tendencies. On the other, he shows his acceptance of the world as it is, in full crisis, by formulating a new grammar that rests not on a system of organization but on an assumption of disorder. And this is one way in which he implicates himself in the world in which he lives, for the new language he thinks he has invented has instead been suggested to him by his very existential situation. He has no choice, since his only alternative would be to ignore the existence of a crisis, to deny it by continuing to rely on the very systems of order that have caused it. Were he to follow this direction, he would be a mystifier, since he would deliberately lead his audience to believe that beyond their disordered reality there is another, ideal situation that allows him to judge the actual state of affairs. In other words, he would lead them to trust in the orderly world expressed by their orderly language" (141-42).

What Eco describes here can also be termed a minoritarian aesthetic, a refashioning or undermining of a form or structure from within that structure. Eco also describes a kind of baroque/classical opposition within artistic choice: to present a form that reaffirms, by its very existence, the notion of an ideal (classicism), or to present a crisis *as crisis*, a form which refers to itself rather than beyond it (baroque). Here, Eco suggests that the baroque choice is not only more existentially responsible, but more politically productive: the radical artist must “implicate” herself “in the world as it is” and “exploit[t] its self-destructive tendencies.”

For this meaning of “minoritarian,” I am referring to the sense outlined by Deleuze and Guattari not only in *A Thousand Plateaus* as already referenced, but also to *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. It is significant that they define this minoritarian literary capability with the work of the modernist Jewish-Bohemian (from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, soon to become Czech Republic), whose experimentalism could be aligned with the baroque turn in aesthetics of this period. Many feminist theorists have contended with the Deleuzo-Guattarian sense of minority, most notably Alice Jardine and Rosi Braidotti.¹³³ Pelagia Goulimari argues that a minoritarian feminism is not only possible but already working “not [in] feminism’s suicidal self-destruction, but, on the contrary, [in] its confidence and strength as perhaps the most successful minoritarian movements of the [twentieth] century” (98). This chapter will trace Rhys’s construction of a minoritarian feminism out of humiliation and towards a kind of strength (perhaps only gestured towards in the novel, rather than realized for Sasha) through the facilitation of negotiated intimacy and the power of choice.

This reference to suicidal self-destruction in the process of feminism becoming minoritarian is crucial to Rhys’s construction of an inchoate feminism in her texts. Suicide is explicitly referenced in this scene in which the oppositional narrative voice is constructed. The narrative “you”—which will become both a reflection of, and oppositional to, the narrating “I” in the novel—emerges for the first time during the narrator’s description of an apparent suicide attempt in an “exchange” with herself in the bathroom mirror. The passage describing the near-drowning contains several ellipses, each marking stages in the process of subject splitting and self alienation:

¹³³ See “Woman in Limbo: Deleuze and his Br(others)” by Jardine, and *Patterns of Dissonance* by Braidotti.

Saved, rescued, fished-up, half-drowned, out of the deep, dark river, dry clothes, hair shampooed and set. Nobody would know I had ever been in it. Except, of course, that there always remains something. Yes, there always remains something. . . . Never mind, here I am, sane and dry, with my place to hide in. What more do I want? . . . I'm a bit of an automaton, but sane, surely—dry, cold and sane. Now I have forgotten about dark streets, dark rivers, the pain, the struggle and the drowning. . . . Mind you, I'm not talking about the struggle when you are strong and a good swimmer and there are willing and eager friends on the bank waiting to pull you out at the first sign of distress. I mean the real thing. You jump in with no willing and eager friends around, and when you sink you sink to the accompaniment of loud laughter. (348, original ellipses).

The description is ambiguous and could be describing an actual near-drowning, or a metaphorical drowning (or both). What's remarkable in the description is the sense of conversation or debate. It is impossible to assign the quickly turning remarks to any single, stable point of view: the rejoinders "Except"; "Yes"; and "Never mind" proliferate without provocation, and without being directed toward a single object, giving the impression of spiraling defensive shots aimed at no one and everyone. The question "What more do I want?" is followed by another set of ellipses that slows the pace and redirects the conversation. A "you" is then addressed after a third set of ellipses, and the narrative voice in the novel from this point finds a stabilizing focal point: it closes the loop, we might say, in order to establish a self-alienating narrative. The narrator can channel questions, accusations, and satirical explanations towards this new "you."

Cathleen Maslen re-reads the "melancholy" of Rhys's narrative projects in Marxian and feminist terms in order to re-position Rhys's narrative recourses to melancholy and nostalgia as demonstrating a discursive response to capitalist and patriarchal structures. Indeed, Maslen argues that Sasha's psychic and material sufferings are linked within a double vulnerability: "It is . . . evident that from Sasha's point of view, the patriarchal symbolic is absolutely complicit with capitalism" (Maslen 126).

Maslen therefore reads Sasha's "explicit, dramatic addresses to a second person" as an effect of paranoia, an "intimation of a hostile onlooker" which is the result of Sasha's alienation of her self to the commodified, which is also represented in "the novel's major motif," the International Exhibition in Paris in 1937 (127).

The International Exhibition of 1937, or World's Fair, works both allusively and elusively in Rhys's final interwar text. The Exhibition, as Rhys's text refers to it, was held from May to September, and the novel's incorporation of this event gives the narrative an historical anchor that Sasha's narrating selves cannot provide.¹³⁴ In a sense, Rhys's indirect representation of the Paris International Exhibition serves a similar purpose as Woolf's use of the national pageant in *Between the Acts*: these events are attempts to resurrect or construct national or international visions of strength. While Woolf's text foregrounds the pageant as a folk tradition which might fortify a sense of national identity ahead of a long fight, Rhys's international spectacle is pushed to the margins of the text to demonstrate the centrifugal forces of a precarious cosmopolitan identity about to break apart.

The Exhibition itself symbolizes internal splitting however: in 1930s Europe, competing ideologies and political factions agitated to restore or destroy forever the long-standing national and imperial systems of order that had been set adrift by the First World War. The Exhibition was a kind of final attempt, by global leaders as well as by scientists

¹³⁴ See Mary Lou Emery's influential reading of the Exhibition in this novel. Emery was one of the first critics to identify Rhys's allusion as signaling the historical and political tensions that contribute to the novel's "experiment with form that also involves an exploration of power during a particular period in the history of modern Europe" (*Jean Rhys at 'World's End'* 146). See also Linda Camarasana's discussion of the text's indirect and "elliptical" references to the Exhibition so that the novel "focus[es] instead on characters who struggle to survive economically and emotionally in a world of deracinated people whose stories reveal the racial and sexual exclusions inherent in nation" (51-52).

and artists, to convey a sense of, if not unity, then at least a hope for a future. But as contemporary observers noted, the 1937 Exhibition in Paris only highlighted the “ideological struggle” among competing national pavilions that could not result in peace—most notably by the German and Soviet Union pavilions which literally erected opposing visions of not only sovereign power but also conflicting visions of a future human race (Kargon 1) (see Figure 6). This irony is explicitly expressed by Sasha’s companion René—the gigolo and former Foreign Legionnaire—who calls the Exhibition’s Star of Peace “mesquin” and “vulgar” (*GMM* 445). The Exhibition also incorporated other kinds of incommensurable identities and agendas, thus serving as its own kind of *mis en abyme* within the narrative, an internal simulacrum of the scattered colonial and political bodies and symbols brought together in a temporary and strained display of arts and technologies. Like Sasha’s traumatized psyche, however, the Exhibition will not hold back the threats of violence or melancholic dissolution.



Figure 6: Exposition Internationale Paris 1937, view of German and Russian pavilions. Image in public domain. Accessed from http://lartnouveau.com/art_deco/expo_1937/pavillons_allemande_urss.htm

Maslen's discussion of melancholy thus complements my argument that the novel's split narrative voice narrativizes Sasha's psychic condition of loss as inwardly-directed judgment. Importantly, this construction of a colonial subject, and a kind of trafficked woman, who is undone by the violence she has internalized is symbolically reflected by the Exhibition's internally-divided display of colonized people and culture alongside celebratory technological and military oppression. Sasha's psychic and narrative struggle transfers the externally-produced conditions of poverty, sexism, colonial racism, and sexual abuse to an internally-directed hate. The *mise en abyme* effect here repeats such abuses and exclusions inwardly to create a self-consuming abyss. The fracturing of voice thus works to suspend and trap Sasha within a narrative of failure and abuse.¹³⁵

The Doppelganger and Narrative Alienation

The narrative also provides doubling at the level of character. *Good Morning, Midnight* is filled with characters who both stand in for Sasha and function as oppositional to Sasha; characters with whom Sasha identifies and then feels estranged from. In other words, the text is populated with reflections of Sasha. Thus, a *mise en abyme* effect is created between the many scenes in which Sasha looks into literal mirrors, and the many scenes in which other characters should be recognized by the reader as mirrors for Sasha. Importantly, the process of identifying-with, and then estranging-from these other characters echoes the nature of the subject-splitting

¹³⁵ Notice that when Sasha returns to the bar from the bathroom, the other woman—the “she” from before—is gone: “When I got upstairs the American and his friend had gone” (348). Significantly, the sentence is structured so that the pronoun “she” is missing from the narrative now, further supporting the possibility that this “she” has been absorbed into Sasha's psyche—or lost in the abyss—for the purpose of maintaining control over “she” and the narrative itself.

introduced at the beginning of the narrative with the bathroom mirror. One important scene in the novel that introduces a possible double for Sasha is the meeting with the painter Serge, a Jewish refugee fleeing Russian pogroms.

In this much-discussed scene, Sasha is taken to Serge's studio to pick out one of his paintings for purchase. Serge is introduced as "a Jew of about forty. He has that mocking look of the Jew, the look that can be so hateful, that can be so attractive, that can be so sad" (400). Like Felix in Barnes's *Nightwood*, the figure of the wandering Jew is introduced into the narrative to help locate it historically and spatially as a cosmopolitan landscape in which foreignness and disaffiliation are allegorized and corporealized at the same time. Because Serge is a Russian refugee, his appearance in the narrative provides a kind of testimony to embodied otherness that finds space to live and create in a cosmopolitan and interwar Paris. By describing Serge as "about forty," the narrative creates an echo of the description of the figure in the café in the novel's opening scene and should signal for the reader an important repetition: Sasha is also "about forty," as well as "sad," and Serge can therefore be considered another reflection of Sasha. We might also note a certain reflection in the two characters' names, especially if "Serge" is pronounced with the Russian hard "g" rather than the French soft "g."

On the other hand, an important racial distinction is made in the narrative's motif of mirroring and repetition. Sasha's racist stereotype of "that mocking look of the Jew" assumes another kind of reflection: that her internal *others* are racially distanced from Jewishness. In other words, as much as Sasha's precarity proliferates, it projects an assumption of whiteness. Thus, like other "trafficked women" who maintain their whiteness even as they relinquish national and familial protections, as outlined in this

dissertation's Introduction, Sasha's sexual-racial spatialization constructs a claim to whiteness through racial stereotyping (like we saw in Barnes's narrative) as a vestige of power in an interwar cosmopolitanism. The bitter tone in this description of Serge's "mocking look" also registers as a paranoia that is not inconsistent with the alienating effect of Sasha's internalization of hate and vulnerability. As Sasha absorbs the projections of "otherness" into her own psychic and affective experiences of identity, space, and time, she also projects otherness onto others. The experience of identity and otherness is therefore performed as another kind of *mise en abyme* in which otherness is reproduced in cycles of absorption and projection, identification and disidentification, alienation as a self-induced and viral effect.

Anne B. Simpson reminds us that the appearance of doppelgangers produces an uncanny experience, according to Freud, and the implication of doubling in this way serves a sense of entrapment by suggesting inevitability: "This 'double' character reinforces the notion of an eternal, inevitable return . . .[;] and thus he symbolically functions within a text as the emissary of stasis, of non-vitality; in short, of death" (92). In recognizing Serge as a double for Sasha, however, some critics have pointed out that the nature of the doubling in this case is different from other doubling in the narrative: Serge seems less ghoulish, seems to represent a more positive possibility for Sasha and social types that identify as artists. For example, Maslen argues that

Serge's doubling of Sasha is thematically distinct from the more uncanny, doppelganger-like scenarios enacted in Sasha's relationships with the commis and René. Sasha's interaction with Serge is exceptional in that she wants to identify with Serge, or at least she wishes to identify herself as one of his kind Sasha's encounter with Serge is not disturbing but reassuring, since he mirrors the more appealing aspects of her own personality and experience, such as her artistic sensibility, her melancholy

insightfulness, and her familiarity with an impulsive, bohemian way of life. (137)

Carey Mickalites and Leah Rosenberg have also read the interaction with Serge in the art studio as representing an escape from the patterns of human interaction restricted to the terms of commodified and statically-hierarchized modernity. Rosenberg reads the episode as revealing the possibility of alternative social equality for Sasha, and as an engagement within modernism that recognizes rather than erases difference. Pointing out that Sasha occupies the position of “potential, if impoverished, buyer,” Rosenberg suggests that Sasha moves towards empowerment (232). Mickalites reads the studio scene as “the only episode in the novel where human interaction is not driven by predatory economic motives” (189), suggesting similarly that the economic positioning and potential transaction in this scene transcend rigid hierarchization and labor exploitation. A re-examination of the scene by focusing on the instability of these economic positions and social identities, while considering how the doppelganger device reinforces Sasha’s self-alienation, can reveal a more complicated and ambiguous dynamic between Sasha and Serge.

We might begin by remembering that both Serge and his friend Delmar, who has brought Sasha to the studio, want Sasha to buy one of Serge’s paintings, which complicates the argument that this moment is outside of economic desires and unequal exchange. The potential bond between Sasha and Serge, at least in part, is a financial one of patronage. Serge’s performance of dancing with one of his inauthentic “African” masks compounds this dynamic. Serge puts on the mask and “Martinique music” and dances for the seated, observing Sasha (400). He is becoming-prostitute here, like Picasso’s *Demoiselles d’Avignon*: performing primitive, performing “other” as art-for-

purchase, creating cultural capital through cultural appropriation. Serge does this consciously to assist the sale, to make Sasha the benefactor of cultural entertainment: “‘To make you laugh,’ he says” (400). Sasha’s wrinkle in this construction, however, which is available to the reader but not to Serge, is that she associates the “close set eye holes” that gaze at her from the mask not with West Africans, or prostitutes, or even with herself—in other words, not the objects of cosmopolitan cultural consumption—but rather with the judging stares of family, employers, and strangers who seek to categorize, subordinate, and exploit her. In other words, while Serge *traffics* in cultural appropriation, Sasha *feels trafficked* in a post-traumatic experience of Serge’s performance: like the Martinique music and the African mask, Sasha feels objectified and consumed.¹³⁶

The episode triggers an uncanny experience of recognition that threatens the stability of the narrative. Sasha notices Serge’s “thin, nervous body” as “strange” and incongruous with, or at least imbalanced by, the “hideous mask,” while “Delmar, very serious and correct, claps his hands in time to the music” (400). The moment is uncomfortable because it reflects back to her a pattern, an aestheticization of performing-prostitute, placing a confusion of Caribbean and West African symbols within a moment already blurring friendship with financial transaction. Rather than being able to *negotiate* a mutually beneficial exchange of art or culture, Sasha feels exploited. This is also a *mise*

¹³⁶ Elsewhere in this novel, and in other Rhys narratives, the protagonist does often identify with art objects, especially those on exhibition or for sale. That Sasha does *not* have that association here is important. On one hand it supports the arguments of Rosenberg and Mickalites, for example, in suggesting that Sasha has escaped objectification here, but because this is the result of Serge’s performance as object-for-sale via African and Martiniquan culture, the encounter does not transcend the practice of objectifying and commodifying certain types of bodies.

en abyme moment: the uncomfortable transaction, and the mocking use of Caribbean culture, reflects Sasha and her own financial and racial instability back to her.

As a result, a partial conversation from the past with a man who would treat her as a prostitute under the guise of normalized post-war revelry interrupts Sasha's attempts to remain engaged with the present scene in Paris in 1937:

(Have you been dancing too much?) "Don't stop."
(Mad for pleasure, all the young people.) "Please don't stop." (400)

The disruption of narrative coherence by both parentheses and italics emphasizes the distinction between the two levels of narrative, and, at the same time, it signals Sasha's divided efforts: the submerged memory is pushing on the primary narrative moment. The submerged memory (represented in the italics) is from her previous time in Paris in the 1920s.

Sasha's association of this memory with Serge's dancing in the art studio is telling: it suggests that Sasha recognizes Serge's performance as desperate, and it triggers her own experiences of both desperation and prostitution. The two scenes working together also reflect interwar gender anxiety as it intersects with financial and colonial precarity: the man speaking from the 1920s flashback thinks Sasha's wobbliness is from being drunk and worn out from dancing, consistent with the contemporary idea of the flapper, the modernized and sexually available woman, but she is in fact very weak from hunger. In this case, the dominant narrative about "modern" post-war young women becomes an opportunity to neglect Sasha's economic precarity. This 1920s "flapper" image is a particular kind of "surplus woman" trope which conveys the sexual, racial, and financial hopes of a privileged transatlantic investor class recovering (quite well, at the moment) from the Great War, but, at the same time, her sexual promiscuity and evasion

of marriage and domestic life is threatening to national and patriarchal schemes of (racial) fortification.

The traumatic moment is registered in not only the narrative overlapping of time and affect but also in a sharp narrative (and psychic) detour into Sasha's Caribbean past, to a memory of lying in a hammock under tree branches while listening to music. The narrative jag is brief, facilitated by the music playing in Serge's studio, which also plays in her memory from some undefined point in her past. The song is represented with French lyrics in Serge's studio ("Maladie d'amour, maladie de la jeunesse . . ." [401]), and then rendered in English lyrics through Sasha's narrative voice, reflecting her remembered experience of the song and emphasizing a colonial and cosmopolitan kaleidoscoping of culture and space: fractured and enjambed at the same time. The phrase "maladie de la jeunesse" from the song is repeated in the text as "pain of youth" and therefore also echoes the remembered dialogue in italics from the 1920s in which the man refers to "all the young people." Thus, following Eve Sedgwick's reparative reading model, we can consider these three different narrative/remembered moments as existing *beside* each other, for both Sasha and us, producing an extended (rather than deeper) narrative experience of Sasha's psychic and affective experience of her position in interwar Europe, which is spatially and racially scattered and suspended at the same time.¹³⁷ Her narrative then abruptly returns to the present where she immediately engages in a discussion of "negro music" with Serge and Delmar. They are considering the music not as art, but as commercial experiences to pick and choose from in Paris nightlife (401).

¹³⁷ Erica Johnson goes further to suggest that the novel's overall structure could be considered in terms of this framework of "beside": "Rhys's aesthetic is that of "beside," and the temporal play of "beside" is very much in evidence in the way in which she creates proliferating adjacencies among Sasha's past and present impressions" (31).

Because the Caribbean memory is vague and both spatially and temporally undefined, this narrative deviation illustrates the problem of erased identities within the colonial-cosmopolitan narrative, a by-product of cultural appropriation. Sasha's emplacement in the cosmopolitan art studio in Paris is briefly unhinged by the recollection of her Caribbean past because the cultural "other" is remembered as internal, not external; and the recognition of this troubles her ability to participate in the cosmopolitan appropriation and integration of non-European culture. When this memory comes back to her—triggered by the coerced situation in the art studio—she can neither clearly articulate or temporalize it. It exceeds the possibilities of classical narrativization. In order to put it in its proper place—or perhaps in order to *erase* it—the Martinique music and uncertain colonial identities must be categorized and controlled in terms of their function in the present as consumable Paris nightlife.

Even though Sasha seems to briefly regain control of the narrative and her place in Serge's studio, "talking away, quite calmly and sedately" (401), she can't stop tears from rolling down her face, and she can't explain to herself or to the others the reason for her tears. The appearance of tears on Sasha's face is a remainder of the psychic break—the tears connect the childhood Caribbean memory to the present cosmopolitan art studio, as well as to the intermediate post-war memory—and they add an embodied trace to the musical coincidence that links the three events. The tears represent narrative *excess*: they cannot be avoided or explained, and so Sasha can only ask that she not be looked at: "Please don't take any notice of me. Just don't take any notice and I'll be all right"

(401).¹³⁸ But the tears also reconnect the three distinct spatial-temporal moments in terms of Sasha's feminist baroque affective mapping of her interwar cosmopolitanism.

That we do not witness the split narrative voice of "you" in this scene as a mechanism to control Sasha's "excess"—her unterritorialized and affective subjectivity, and her identity as a sexual-colonial threat—is significant. Serge as double might explain this: in the possibility of identifying herself *with* Serge, Sasha repeats the practice of alienating herself to others in order to sustain, even suspend the narrative through repetition. The repetition and splitting serve the purpose of not only suspending Sasha's narrative in emotional failure but also maintaining her narrative and her identity as always scattered and scattering. By repeating subjectification in the form of proliferating doubles, the narrative suspends Sasha, along with all the other versions of her, in a *mise en abyme* of doubles eternally marching *into* the abyss, actually filling the abyss with fragments of the same self. Rhys's internally-colonized cosmopolitan landscape therefore prevents the possibility of authentic companionship or a recuperative intersubjectivity because the abyss of alienated other/self leaves no room for the intimacy. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue that "Continuous variation constitutes the becoming-minoritarian of everybody, as opposed to the majoritarian Fact of Nobody" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 106). In situating "others" as always probably the same, *Good Morning, Midnight* performs the practice of majoritarian substitution of Known for the unknowable—or the uncountable, another term for minority. In the scene in the art studio, Serge steps in to try to suture up the brief exposure of "excess" that might

¹³⁸ Massumi's notion of "intensities" is relevant here, especially his suggestion that reading affective "excess" as "nonconscious" and "disconnected [...] from narration" allows recognition of unterritorialized subjectivities ("The Autonomy of Affect" 85).

facilitate deterritorialization: an escape from the endless procession of replicating of Nobodies.

Though Sasha is initially suspicious of Serge (as she is with most people), she begins to consider him a potential ally in this section of the novel. For example, she first assumes that Serge's description of his own weeping at the genius of Van Gogh is nothing more than self-indulgent mansplaining: "He speechifies about 'the terrible effort, the sustained effort [. . .]' Etcetera, etcetera . . ." (402). She does not believe that Serge could experience the same kind of vulnerability to emotion as herself. She is therefore surprised when she notices that his hand is shaking when he hands her a cigarette: "He isn't lying. I think he has really cried over Van Gogh" (402). Sasha recognizes a familiar "excess" in Serge, visible in the shaking hands, and it melts her guard ("he starts getting hold of me" [402]). This introduces the possibility of collective and egalitarian community formation, not unlike that proposed by Rosenberg in her reading of this scene (234).

Serge's role as double in this scene is both emotionally and narratively complex, however. The appearance of excess in Serge's shaking hand does more than double Sasha's excess, as something like "excess" cannot be doubled—the math doesn't work—but rather we might say that excess can be amplified or even *joined*. Serge's emergence in the narrative therefore seems at first to be a special kind of double, promising a more hopeful outcome for Sasha and her association with him. The narrative voice sets up this potential as well, as Serge's dialogue echoes Sasha's self-narration with an important shift, which Sasha notices: "'Don't drink just now,' he says. 'Later, I'll get some, if you like. I'll make you some tea now'" (402). The emphasis of address, of the repetition of

the pronoun “you,” portends a possible escape from the Sasha-Sasha loop of self-hate, accusations, and assumed failure. Importantly, the authoritative voice here is not recommending that Sasha make herself invisible, as it does elsewhere, but is recommending that she make herself *comfortable*.

That Serge’s appearance in the narrative has the potential to transform the narrative is also hinted at when Serge’s “excess” spills over into narration of his own story: “he is in a flow of talk which I can’t interrupt” (402). This need to translate “excess” into a narrative, as well as the content of the story Serge eventually tells—an encounter with a displaced Martinique woman in London—doubles Sasha’s own narrative. At first Sasha welcomes this, seems poised to *join* with Serge in his excess of narrative, in shared experience. We see this openness in her brief, encouraging interjections at the start of his story: “Oh, you’ve lived in London?”; “Oh yes, I know it” (402). This *open* orientation (emphasized with the repeated word “Oh”) shifts quickly, however, when Serge describes a weeping, prostrate woman who asks for a drink, a description that seems to echo what has just happened in the studio in the immediate present (and has happened to Sasha before, too many times to count). In other words: there are multiple kinds of *mise en abyme* in this studio scene, between Sasha and Serge, and between Sasha’s narrative and Serge’s narrative. Sasha recognizes the reflection: “Is he getting at me?” (402). From this point on, Sasha becomes suspicious again, and she is no longer open to Serge’s story, or to him. Serge’s *mise en abyme* story locks Sasha back into her narrative of abuse and self-hate.

Recognizing the similarities between the doubling in this scene and the overall narrative representation of self-alienation *through* doubling or splitting facilitates a

recognition of the motivations for narrativization as already pathology, a symptomatic response to ideological domination. Sasha's narrative spirals into Serge's narrative, and then into the Martinique woman's narrative, because Serge recounts not only his encounter with the woman but the story the woman tells him—which, we should note, echoes not only Sasha's story but also perhaps Serge's, and Delmar's, and the stories of other displaced, precarious figures who appear in Sasha's narrative. Narratives, and the narrating process, repeats again and again, and yet the outcomes seem resistant to change. The embedded narratives, which are already situated in a closed-loop narrative of self-alienation, underscore the function of this kind of narrativization as suspending subjects in failure.

The doubling of narrative voices and content in Rhys's project also makes visible the instability of that narrative project, however, and this is most apparent when we see Serge as both *possibly the same* and *impossibly different*. For example, Serge's narrativizing voice seems at first remarkably the same as the alienated voice we've experienced in Sasha's narrative: "Don't let yourself get hysterical, because if you do that it's the end," Serge says to the Martinique woman, which sounds identical in tone and content to Sasha's self-narration (403). When Sasha remarks to Serge, "It's a very sad story," and adds, "I'm sure you were kind to her" (403), we are alerted not only to the sarcasm in tone but to an important distinction between Serge's narrative and Sasha's. Serge makes very clear that he separates himself from the Martinique woman's experience, and that Sasha should understand that the Martiniquaise couldn't possibly be her because "She wasn't a white woman. She was half-negro—a mulatto" (402-3). In fact, Serge makes a point to repeat that he "couldn't understand" the woman (403), and

that to him she was not a person but rather a “stone” or zombie, “no longer quite human, no longer quite alive” (403). So when Sasha seems to pull back from the possibility of allying herself with Serge, when she is cold to him when he turns to her for affirmation of his story, some responsibility for this re-inserted distance can be assigned to Serge’s approach to the story, to his refusal to understand (or get close to) the Martinique woman, and to the way he both separates Sasha from the woman and generalizes all women: “But perhaps all women have cruel eyes. What do you think?” (404).

Sasha does not join in or affirm Serge’s narrative but rather brushes off Serge’s comments: “Well, some people feel that way, and other people don’t. It all depends” (404). Though it may be true that Sasha is resisting his attempts to make her sympathize with the other woman, the factors in this resistance are complicated. Serge’s narrative reincorporates Sasha, and this Martinique woman, as losers, even as *already-dead*. This reincorporation of Sasha as stuck in a certain kind of narrative with inevitable outcomes is reinforced by the abrupt departure of Serge from the studio—to meet someone for an appointment, perhaps another sale—leaving Sasha behind with Delmar, who takes the opportunity to make unwanted sexual advances on Sasha. Serge is demonstrably not the same kind of narrator as Sasha, then, as he is able to remove himself from the crying, drunk woman in his story, and the one in his studio. Here, the *mise en abyme* structure offers a glimpse at important differences as well as similarities. While Serge’s political persecution due to his ethnic identity has left him financially precarious and therefore willing to offer his art—but not his body—for consumption, the repeating images of destitute refugees in cosmopolitan centers can be differentiated in terms of gender and

race. Sasha is offended by both the similarities and differences that the Martinique woman represents to Serge and to herself.

The Washing-up Closet and Narrative Risk

The episode in the art studio illustrates, through narrative-doubling, the seemingly inescapable processes of narrative alienation and territorialization. In particular, the narrative reflects an endless re-articulation of the narratives of losers: the minoritarian subjects who populate stories and cosmopolitan cities as already-dead and yet are necessary for the aesthetic totalization of experience in a colonial modernity—history’s winners need history’s losers. As if Sasha-as-narrator, along with the reader, are to be tested on this lesson, the following chapter in the novel offers an opportunity for Sasha to make a choice: accept narrative self-alienation or fall into the void of intersubjectivity, which represents both risk and possibility. Like other encounters with minoritarian—or precarious—modern subjects in the novel, the chapter that follows the scene in the studio describes an encounter with another possible double for Sasha, a figure whom Sasha recognizes as familiar because of her abject position. Yet the episode stands out as different from other encounters with possible doubles. Sasha explicitly rejects this figure and the alternative narratives the figure evokes.

Having ducked into a “tabac” to get out of the rain—and to get drunk—Sasha is at first concerned with how the proprietress and waiter might be judging her: “God, it’s funny being a woman!” she thinks to herself about her predicament of having to make up a story (waiting for a film to start next door) in order to justify her presence in a bar, alone, in the afternoon, even in a cosmopolitan city that already demands disaffiliation and creative invention (408). She is soon distracted from her self-pity, however, by

“noises of washing-up going on behind” a small door (409). From behind the door emerges the washing-up girl who labors in the “coffin” sized room from which “An unbelievable smell comes” (409). The girl embodies, not just reflects, key images already introduced in the text: the washroom as symbolic of self-alienation and narrative entrapment, and the suspension of minoritarian subjects as already-dead, as zombies, in the post-WWI cosmopolitan spaces that attract different kinds of walking-war-dead. That the girl emerges from what Sasha describes as a “coffin,” and that she both exists in, and performs the services of, a washroom, compound this figure as both ultimate double for Sasha, as well as ultimate risk for Sasha: here the *mise en abyme* presents itself as narrative threat.

At first, Sasha thinks: “I know her. This girl who does all the dirty work and gets paid very little for it. Salut!” (409). The cheer of “Salut!” also situates a sense of solidarity between the two, and therefore announces the proletarian girl as a possible double. Sasha continues to observe the girl from this horizontal, even shared, social positionality and wonders, “How does she manage not to knock her elbows every time she moves? How can she stay in that coffin for five minutes without fainting? . . .” (409, original ellipsis). Sasha recognizes the trapped sensation the girl must feel, the threat of physical pain, and she empathizes with the girl’s subjection to the putrid remains of the customers’ drinks and food: as a kind of social left-over, she must also deal with the left-overs of others. The ellipsis after Sasha’s questions, however, signal a shifting of narrative voice (as we’ve seen already in the narrative), and therefore marks the space as narrative potential.

After the ellipsis the narrative voice seems to answer the implied question resulting from Sasha's observations: "Sorry for her? Why should I be sorry for her?" (409). The narrating "I" sounds defensive, and the previous empathetic tone has been replaced with an oppositional one. In order to maintain this latter perspective, the narrative voice throws questions back at the initial narrative perspective: "Hasn't she got sturdy legs and curly hair? And don't her strong hands sing the Marseillaise? And when the revolution comes, won't those be the hands to be kissed?" (409). The split voice, then, renegotiates the narrative position away from the possibility of engaging with the girl on her own terms, away from the possibility of shared subjectivity and reciprocal intimacy.

Similar to Sasha's racial-spatialization of Serge as Jewish in order to maintain her distance and claim a whiteness as a differentializing privilege, the washing-up girl is re-constituted as *other* to Sasha, in her physicality ("sturdy legs and curly hair") as well as her narrative potential. The girl has been marginalized and totalized at the same time in order to create an insurmountable gap between them: the girl is both racially other and the future beneficiary of a communist revolution, another kind of nationalist and identitarian threat to a cosmopolitan drifter. This is an example of the diverging narratives of empire and revolution which organized the transatlantic interwar political and economic landscape, and neither of these narratives appeals to Sasha. Like other near-encounters with companionship in this novel, this scene provokes regret—in the reader, and likely for Sasha—that Sasha doesn't find solidarity with the washer-girl. This scene suggests, however, that whether colonial-stasis or socialist-revolution, state or becoming-state, both represent coercive and potentially abusive narratives for Sasha.

The post-ellipsis narrative voice in this scene excludes Sasha from revolutionary pasts and futures, as well as from the washing-up girl's present. Sasha thus cannot feel solidarity with her, nor pity for her, and the narrative re-directs Sasha's potential engagement with the girl back towards self-hate in the following paragraphs:

“I am a respectable woman, une femme convenable, on her way to the nearest cinema. [. . .] And a lot [the waiter] cares—I could have spared myself the trouble. [. . .] I am trying so hard to be like you. I know I don't succeed, but look how hard I try” (409).

So the momentary opening in the narrative—represented by the actual space of the washing-up closet—has closed again, sewn up in the closed loop of Sasha-judging-Sasha. This is reinforced by the explicit narrative reference to “pity,” which has been displaced from the girl's particular abject position to a generalized state that hovers over Sasha's narrative and yet is never productive: “But think how hard I try and how seldom I dare. Think—and have a bit of pity” (409). The narrative seems to be addressing the waiter and patroness with this last appeal, but the instability of voice leading up to it allows some ambiguity: perhaps the split voice is appealing to itself in a twist of the *mise en abyme* form: a form alienating itself to itself.

This shift in narrative potential displaces *pity* derived from recognition of the washing-up girl—a recognition of particularized, corporealized experience outside of Sasha's own experience that stimulates empathy based in sameness *and* difference. The potential is overwritten by a generalized sense of self-pity that seems expected and constant. The washing-up girl and her washing closet represent a possible escape from Sasha's fixed narrative—they are a gap in the narrative, another kind of void in the text that functions like the space that appears in a baroque fold. In this fold, Sasha and the reader glimpse the other *as* other, but they also see in this gap a reflection of self. The

entanglement of self-and-other that is presented to Sasha in this washing-up closet represents the risk of minority as the recognition of intersubjectivity.

In my reading of this encounter in the café, the gap in the narrative symbolized by this coffin-sized, stinking closet momentarily destabilizes the narrative project and offers Sasha a material and emotional alternative, but the nature of this alternative involves another kind of process: “the specifically ‘baroque’ point of view that the fold emblemizes engages the subject in a voyage through the field of the object that unhinges the distinction between those two positions” (Bal, “Enfolding Feminism” 214). The gap, or dark space of a fold, beckons a viewer to engage with the unknown, but engaging within that fold transforms the viewer’s relationship to the unknown. Within the fold, the experience of subjectivity becomes an experience of intersubjectivity, and the nature of the fold reinforces this: just as there is no actual break or separation in a fold, the baroque aesthetic of the fold emphasizes co-formation, or, as Bal emphasizes, “correlativism” (*Quoting Caravaggio* 30). But Sasha rejects the possibility of vulnerability to an *other*—a risk that promises some type of change, whether good or bad—and instead Sasha reiterates a closed-loop of self-hate, an anticipation of failure as already resolved in her narrative of already-dead, always-already loser. Thus, the textual ellipses—another kind of void in the narrative which can also be read as the space in a fold—signal the process, and the choice, of moving towards or away from the other.

The risk of intersubjectivity, which the metaphor of the fold helps to illustrate, is not only that one recognizes that they are connected to another, but that self and other are co-formed and co-forming. Recognition of the washing-up girl stimulates a kind of recognition of self for Sasha that diverges from other narrative moments of doubling. She

sees that she is constructed by the washing-up girl, but that she also *constructs* the girl in her racialization of her, and in her spatialization of her as poised for a future that Sasha cannot access. But this means that Sasha is also responsible for the girl's present experience of abjection. Apprehension of the responsibility of this intersubjectivity is what is most disturbing for her, especially as Sasha recognizes how narratives can suspend both the washing-up girl in her existence, and Sasha in her own. Crucially, there is no narrative circulating in the interwar transatlantic imaginary that would contain both of them without destroying one of them. The "risk," then, is having to break from these classically authoritative and coercive narratives altogether. To instead construct an alternative narrative that does not already reflect a process of alienation or zero-sum competition. The narrative voice prevents such an escape by returning to self-reflection in the form of self-abuse and capitulation:

What can I do about it? Nothing. I don't deceive myself.
That's settled. I can start on the second Pernod. (Rhys 410)

“Yes—yes—yes”: Embracing Intersubjectivity and Feminist Baroque

Indeterminacy

This will bring us to a reconsideration of the final section of the novel and the enigmatic final proclamation by Sasha of “Yes.” The ending has deservedly drawn critical attention and debate, which Mary Lou Emery has suggested falls into two general categories: either the ending of *Good Moring, Midnight* represents to critics an ultimate defeat and even death, including the death of any hope for a self that isn't always already subject to alienation; or critics read transcendence and unification in Sasha's embrace of the commis, the emaciated salesman who is her taunting—and haunting—neighbor in her Parisian boarding house. Many critics reflect on Sasha's conspicuous echo of Molly

Bloom's "yes," which concludes James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and come to different conclusion about this echo might mean for Sasha—who is, we should note, not like the married, maternal (though sexually promiscuous) Molly.¹³⁹ There are those, however, who shift their reading to interpret not only Sasha's fate, but the fate of the forms and conditions out of which Rhys writes her. Gardiner, for example, indicts the language and social institutions of patriarchal capitalism which cannot be escaped but only reflected (249). Mickalites diagnoses the "exhaustion" of both Sasha and modernism, the latter of which he suggests is "suspended" by the novel (194).

I will approach this ending by engaging, again, with the narrative voice, and by considering the orientations of Sasha to both herself and to others. Key to this final scene is Sasha's relationship to René, the sometimes-gigolo who presents himself to Sasha as potentially for sale, but also as potentially a friend, and, most crucially, as potential rapist. That these categories are never quite definite—to Sasha or the reader—is important for the ambiguity of the ending, but it also repeats the novel's pattern of ambiguous identities. The final section of the novel opens with a note from René left with the patronne at Sasha's hotel, and René has apparently fooled the patronne into believing he is "an English monsieur," which at first confuses Sasha, because even though she may be unsure of René's nationality or ethnicity, she is certain he is not English—nor a monsieur.¹⁴⁰ When Sasha goes up to her room, she is accosted by her neighbor, the

139 Elizabeth Abel, for example, concludes that "Sasha's acceptance of the traveling salesman is nevertheless a kind of psychic triumph [. . .] both an ironic parody of Molly Bloom's affirmation and a sign that she has achieved a portion of Molly's wholeness and simplicity" (167). Nicole Flynn, on the other hand, argues that in "echoing Joyce's famous conclusion, Rhys underscores that her novel ends with a false affirmation. [. . .] She cannot imagine a life without a future, nor can she imagine a new future for herself into existence [which] leads to her destruction" (62).

140 René asserts that he is "French-Canadian" while Sasha suspects him of being "Spanish-American" and assumes that he would run up against "racial" prejudice in London (*GMM* 390).

commis, who opens his door to shout “Vache! Sale vache” at her and then quickly shuts it. From inside her own room, Sasha continues to listen for this abuse, “straining my ears to hear what he is saying” (435). When there is a knock at the door, she assumes that the commis has dared to confront her directly. But when she opens the door, it is René.

I start with this summary to establish the importance of René’s ambiguity, and to note the foreshadowing of the substitution of one for the other of these two figures: the commis and René. Like other marginal figures who appear in the novel, both René and the commis might also be considered possible doubles for Sasha. As many critics have noted, René, like Sasha, is stateless, of ambiguous background, and drifts through Paris in hopes of getting a drink bought for him by an older, richer person who might also provide a bed. René is therefore a reflection of Sasha’s younger self, the Sasha who was in Paris years before in the more hopeful post-war scene of Paris in the 1920s. This is the psychic-space that she has been both avoiding and recreating during her current visit to the city; it is the narrative always lurking underneath—and sometimes poking through—the narrative we are reading. René, therefore, embodies Sasha’s repressed memories. The commis also embodies a repression, an echo of a figure who emerges in Sasha’s dream at the beginning of the novel as a father-like figure in a white gown with a wound that bleeds. Described as emaciated and perhaps half-dead, like the other zombies who inhabit Rhys’s texts, the commis seems to repeat many images and ideas crucial to the narrative, including the economic precarity associated with age, the cruelty of patriarchal judgement, the circulation of meaningless commodities and capital (because he is a salesman), the threat of sexual assault, and the misery of wounded and wandering victimhood as a result of war and colonial modernity. While René represents Sasha’s

past, the commis seems to be the ghost of Sasha's future; he also symbolizes Sasha's own psychic and affective *haunting*—in the *mise en abyme* structure, the commis is the ghost of Sasha, Rhys, and perhaps also the reader.

Associating René and the commis with time, with Sasha's past and future, and with her simultaneous nostalgia for and fear of those psychic-temporal spaces, allows a reading of the novel's ending that combines the narrative's themes, structure, and characters in an indictment of oppressive and unnatural constructions of history: the colonial modernity that has produced the excess and the excluded subjects that populate cosmopolitan Paris in 1937. This oppressive and convoluted construction of history that accumulates losers so that a few winners might triumph is mirrored in the belabored narrative efforts we have been reading. Furthermore, associating René and the commis with *memory* and with the subconscious compounds this indictment.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari posit that "Memories have a reterritorialization function," but, importantly, memories can also be related to the process of *deterritorialization*, as processes of de/reterritorialization are connected and unstable, after all (294). To illustrate the oppositional processes of becoming and territorialization, Deleuze and Guattari use the metaphor of graphing with points, lines, and axes. Events and identities might be considered as points, and narratives organize these points via axes and lines that link them. While "Memory," with a capital "M," serves a majoritarian strategy (293), there is the possibility that memory (lower case "m") can perform the minoritarian action of flight, of becoming. The difference can be described in this way: a majoritarian practice will link two or more points together with lines and present them as necessarily connected in a particular order or hierarchy. There

is an “origin” point and subsequent or subordinate points; the Memory designates the “origin” and proper sequencing of points on the lines. There is no sense of dynamism in this majoritarian strategy, as the lines and points are all fixed (territorialized)—like the colonial spatialization of the interwar setting of Rhys’s novel. A minoritarian practice of *becoming*, on the other hand, shifts action and significance to the lines, undermines the possibility of “origin,” and resists designations of direction in terms of past and future because everything becomes *the middle*, the middle of the line:

But a line of becoming has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination . . . A line of becoming has only a middle. The middle is not an average; it is fast motion, it is the absolute speed of movement. A becoming is always in the middle . . . (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 294)

This configuration of M/memory is relevant to our reading of René and the commis when we consider that they preoccupy Sasha and the narrative not only as menacing doubles who represent Sasha’s fears and shame, but they also represent physical and emotional threats to her present existence. The thematic organization of René as “past” and the commis as “future” connects their roles in the narrative with the structural significance of Sasha’s struggle to separate and order her memories and dreams, fears and anxieties, and physical and emotional interactions and needs in her colonial cosmopolitan landscape. Their overlap at the conclusion of the novel, then, can be read in terms of a collapse of these categories in Sasha’s narrative. Whether we can consider the narrative’s ending as definitively minoritarian or majoritarian, however—whether this collapse is a collapse into “the middle” or simply a consolidation of Sasha’s points as fixed—remains to be seen.

The question of the nature of collapse—whether majoritarian or minoritarian—in the novel’s final section can first be approached by returning to the work that the

narrative voice does to organize the narrative and suspend Sasha in an oppositional and self-alienating orientation towards her own life, to suspend her in the closed-loop that resists engaging in good faith with others or with her own “excess” of emotionality and experience. Many critics have commented on the psychic “split” that occurs in the last section of the novel—when a “she” is referenced by the narrator—but my reading has already traced this unstable voice splitting throughout the novel. Therefore, we will look closely at when and how the “she” re-emerges at the end, and what happens to her.

To set up this re-appearance of “she” at the end of the novel, we have to begin in the second chapter of Part Four, after Sasha has agreed to go out with René (who, as already mentioned, has surprisingly shown up at Sasha’s door when she expected to see the commis). After a disappointing dinner and conversation, Sasha hopes to escape, by herself, to see the Exhibition one last time before leaving Paris to return to England. René joins her despite her wishes—an early indication of his coercive and potentially abusive style of intimacy. While Sasha admires the Exhibition’s fountains lit up (“This is what I wanted—the cold fountains, the cold, rainbow lights on the water . . .” [444-5]), René makes fun of the Star of Peace (“It’s mesquin, your Star of Peace” [445]).¹⁴¹ Because René is not properly dressed for the cold, they don’t stay long and instead look for a warm place to get a drink, ending up at Deux Magots—an iconic café of the avant-garde interwar scene where expatriates and refugees alike found solace and warmth.

While there, Sasha and René discover that their experiences have overlapped in the past, that they have both spent time as “guests” of a rich couple in the south of

¹⁴¹ See Emery (1990) and Camarasana (2009), who offer persuasive readings of the significance of the Exhibition to the novel, as well as this scene’s allusions to it.

France—a revelation that reminds Sasha of her own sex-trafficked past.¹⁴² Sasha remarks on the effect this knowledge has for their relationship: “One would think that that would give us more confidence in each other. Not at all, it makes us suspicious” (448). Thus, ironically, the more these cosmopolitan strangers—these transient discards of a colonial-patriarchal global order—learn about each other, the less they can trust each other. She begins to wonder about the rest of “his story,” and to wonder about how the different parts of his story fit together: “When did all this happen, and what is his story? Did he stay in France for a time, get into trouble over here and then join the Legion? Is that the story?” (448).¹⁴³ Sasha’s questioning of René’s narrative—and particularly how it all might fit together—provides an ironic moment for Sasha’s own narrative, a metafictional experience of *mise en abyme* for both Sasha and the reader. As we’ve seen before, the uncanny moment (narrative instability brought on by consciousness of reflection and repetition) brings intersubjective risk to the diegetic level and sends Sasha in search of a lavabo.

In the lavabo, Sasha recuperates her self-orientation. In a scene that approaches magical realism, the mirror recognizes Sasha and reassures her that it (she?) always remembers faces: “Would you believe me that, of all the faces I see, I remember each one, that I keep a ghost to throw back at each one—lightly, like an echo—when it looks into me? All glasses in all lavabos do this” (448). Here we can see Sasha as both the mirror and what is reflected in the mirror: she herself *is* a *mise en abyme*, an infinite

¹⁴² The term “guest” is in quotation marks here because Sasha implies that she and René were both more like employees of this same couple at different periods, and René’s implied prostitution reminds Sasha of her own exploitation by this couple and others.

¹⁴³ Sasha’s repeated question of “what is his story” echoes the menacing voices she hears in her head in Serge’s art studio when confronted with the African mask and emphasizes the burden of legitimacy, the burden of fitting into an acceptable social narrative.

abyss of reflected images, of repeated selves. The danger of this is losing a sense of self, of course: which is real? Which is the original? The entrapment of narrative-alienation thus separates Sasha from both others and herself.

This narrative strategy has been generally effective. It is in the wavering, however, of narrative control and of identity formation—when a void in the narrative appears, announcing a risk of intersubjectivity, of alternative narrativity—that we have tried to recognize other possibilities, for Sasha and for the narrative. I will trace examples of such wavering in the final scenes of the novel in order to approach the possibilities of its conclusion. For example, after Sasha returns to René from the lavabo, he coerces her to reveal what she is afraid of, why she won't let him spend the night with her. She eventually erupts into a long declaration of her fear, which is really hate ("What I really mean is that I hate them"), of "the whole bloody human race" (450). In between this "raving," however, Sasha-as-narrator interrupts and interjects: "'Oh, shut up. Stop it. What's the use?'" (450). This interruption is noticeably framed by the narrative voice; it is introduced as Sasha's "Thinking," and is set off by quotes (450). It is almost as if the narrative voice is making a show of scolding herself for revealing this information. This interjection is not narrative "excess" but is quite controlled and controlling, right down to the quotation marks which keep the scolding properly identified and separated. After Sasha's outburst for René, however, a set of ellipses signals a different kind of narrative interruption. What is said after this ellipsis is much more difficult to identify or to track:

. . . I know all about myself now, I know. You've told me so often. You haven't left me one rag of illusion to clothe myself in. But by God, I know what you are too, and I wouldn't change places . . .

Everything spoiled, all spoiled. Well don't cry about it. No I won't cry about it. . . . (450-51, original ellipses)

While on the surface it seems that the I/you split here might be easily identified as Sasha/René, our reading of the unstable narrative voice prepares us to be skeptical of this and to consider the ambiguity both of the I/you narrative voice and of its mutability within the passage. For example, we have already seen that “you” often situates Sasha as oppositional to herself, and so the “you” that emerges after the ellipses here can be read, again, as directed at Sasha’s split self. What is interesting about this confrontation is the accusations of illusion and lost illusion: it seems that the mutually-sustaining illusions that have suspended Sasha’s split-self have come undone.

We know it is a kind of breaking point because Sasha goes on to describe a state of oblivion: “now I am lying in a misery of utter darkness. Quite alone. No voice, no touch, no hand. . . . How long must I lie here? For ever? No, only for a couple of hundred years this time, miss. . . .” (451, original ellipses). The “darkness” has already been introduced in the narrative—just before Sasha has her “outburst” for René about hating the human race, a description of this darkness is offered, the same quote I have used for the epigraph to this chapter. The darkness is defined as outside of narrative time (“there is no past, no future, there is only this blackness”), and yet “past” and “future” are not excluded from this void but are already there: “changing faintly, slowly, but always the same” (450). And so how do we read Sasha’s darkness? Is it outside of Sasha’s narrative construction (of replicating hotel rooms, streets, cafés, doppelgangers, and general failure), or is it the epitome, the *concentration* of Sasha’s narrative—like a black hole which compresses to infinity Sasha’s narrative “sameness” so that it becomes a singularity—the *abyme* as singularity?¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Rachel Bowlby describes Sasha’s darkness in terms of a black hole to emphasize its connection to Sasha’s narrative construction of time and space: “The black hole has neither ground nor time, and after the

The second reference to darkness after the narrative breaking point I have described offers the possibility that it is outside of the narrative: beyond, before—and perhaps even *after*. The question, “How long must I lie here?” which is answered with “only for a couple of hundred years this time” suggests that this darkness is more like a void that exists adjacent to the narrative we have been reading, a void where there is “No voice” to organize a narrative, and a void which Sasha has been in before (“this time”). This darkness (void) must be considered as different from Sasha’s memories, different from the “excess” which sometimes disrupts narrative control.

While memories interrupt the narrative by penetrating and spilling over into it (by producing “excess” which manifests as unexplained tears or shaking hands), this particular void seems completely separate from the narrative.¹⁴⁵ The reference to “a couple of hundred years this time” confuses the sense of (human/narrative) time and offers no way to map a route between the “darkness” and Sasha’s narrative present—except through a colonial history of modernity. This is also suggested by the enigmatic word “miss” that comes after this reference to hundreds of years and just before a set of ellipses, thus suggesting that the word is incomplete. The word “miss” first suggests the possible splitting, again, of a voice in two, that the answer of “a couple of hundred years” responds to the question preceding, and addresses a “Miss”—and yet the word is not capitalized, and we already know there is “No voice” in this void. Could it be the first

fall there can only be a semblance of the missing co-ordinates, superimposed as the arbitrariness of the plan” (39). My use of the metaphor offers something different, however, in the sense of compounding sameness, of the *concentration* of time and space, rather than the evacuation of time and space.

¹⁴⁵ I am suggesting that the darkness/void in Rhys’s novel is not interchangeable with the way Massumi has tracked “affect” in terms of narrative theory. Affect, as “excess” or “intensity” in Massumi’s theory, seems more like the byproduct of narrative construction, the remainder of the substance (“conscious-autonomic mix”) required to suspend a self in a narrative (Massumi 85). Sasha’s darkness/void, on the other hand, seems to be completely removed from the narrative process, an alternative to it.

part of the word *missing*? Sasha is *missing* in the void? This possibility introduces an interpretation of the void that links it to Sasha's psychic and affective connection to the colonial history of the Caribbean, and to the colonality of modernity in general, invoking the terror of lives, especially the lives of Africans stolen into slavery, many of whom were lost in the seas—a literal and historical abyss—during the transatlantic sea voyage.

But we cannot even construct the concept of “missing” with this word “miss”: it offers neither a “Miss” (a person), nor a “missing” (a spatial-temporal concept). The indecipherable word dissolves into an ellipsis where, we assume, the narrative itself has also dissolved. The dissolution of narrative activity is emphasized by a literal gap on the page: after this set of ellipses there is a blank space on the page—a typographical effect we have seen in the other feminist baroque texts examined in this study. After the gap, however, the narrative is restarted with difficulty: Sasha “heave[s] myself out of the darkness” and returns to the scene, already/still in progress around her: “And there I am, and there he is, the poor gigolo” (451).¹⁴⁶

The implications of darkness and the void are not to be forgotten, however, because Sasha again finds herself in a kind of darkness in the next chapter when she has parted with the gigolo and goes up the stairs to her room. The light goes out in the stairwell and “everything is in darkness” when she gets to the landing in front of her door (453). It is in this moment that she discovers there is someone else in the darkness with

146 This is one of Rhys's many (ironic) allusions to other narratives and writers, especially modernist writers. The phrase “there I am, and there he is” echoes the phrase “there she was,” which significantly repeats throughout Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. In Woolf's text, the phrase emphasizes Clarissa Dalloway's solidity in her own narrative: she is a figure orbited by others who achieve their own orientation in relation to her coordinates. “There she was” signals an eternity in a moment that is also embodied in Clarissa. Sasha, on the other hand, is not so solid, and she struggles explicitly to order the coordinates of her existence. That she is joined by “the poor gigolo” also *writes back* to Woolf's text by decentering, splitting, and undermining the meaning of “there she was.” In fact, an argument could be made that Rhys's entire novel is a late modernist writing-back to *Mrs. Dalloway*.

her, when she sees the light from a cigarette. She calls out “‘Who is it? Who’s there? Qui est là’” but does not wait for an answer before moving towards the person and embracing him (453).¹⁴⁷ It is René, whom she is suddenly happy to see: “Now everything is in my arms on this dark landing—love, youth, spring, happiness, everything I thought I had lost” (453).

It seems that, in the void where Sasha was missing, she was most concerned about losing these things, these abstract ideas that only classical narratives can construct and put in their proper order. Confusing the darkness on the landing for another void, Sasha is relieved for the chance to hold onto another body and imagine the possibilities it offers: love, youth, seasons. The relief is momentary, however, for as soon as they are inside her room behind the closed door she registers that something is missing: “We kiss each other fervently, but already something has gone wrong. I am uneasy, half of myself somewhere else” (453). This may be the first reference to Sasha’s split self at the level of the narrating self’s consciousness. While the tumble into the void stripped Sasha of her voice, the process of reconstituting and then splitting that voice has quickly started all over again in these final scenes—the *mise en abyme* is speeding up.

What triggers the splitting—perhaps the real source of anxiety for Sasha, rather than the alienated fear of her own voice—is René’s threat of sexual violence. In fact, Sasha must contend with René as the real physical and emotional threat in the following section: they argue, they struggle, and Sasha’s transformation of this disturbing combat into another example of her own inevitable failure brings Sasha’s narrative to its climax.

¹⁴⁷ This question “Qui est là” is the repeated question by Annette’s parrot Coco in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a question which announces, and echoes, the thematic struggle for identity in that novel. We can therefore see an intertextual *mise en abyme* across and outside of Rhys’s texts.

In the (attempted) rape of Sasha,¹⁴⁸ René embodies the oppositional “I” as a sexual predator and abusive partner, giving Sasha directions, berating her, and stealing her voice from her:

“You think you’re very strong, don’t you?” he says.

“Yes, I’m very strong.”

[. . .]

“If you’re so strong, why do you keep your eyes shut?”

[. . .]

I lie very still, I don’t move. Not open my eyes. . . .

“Je te ferai mal,” he says. “It’s your fault.”

When I open my eyes I feel the tears trickling down from the outside corners.

“That’s better, that’s better. Now say ‘I tell you to go, and you’ll go.’”

I can’t speak.

“That’s better, that’s better.” (456-57)

René has hijacked the narrative by not only stealing her voice but attempting to re-write the story (“Now say”), which appropriates (and also repeats) the work that Sasha’s self-alienating narrative voice has done throughout. The combined (attempted) rape and story-theft provokes Sasha’s narrative defense mechanisms. In the next lines, Sasha describes pain that is both physical and emotional, a reanimation of subjectivity: “because it hurts, when you have been dead, to come alive. . . .” (457, original ellipsis). The ellipsis here signal another narrative transition, a gap in which the narrative voice begins to split again.

When René asks “T’as compris?” Sasha recognizes the distance between herself and the voice that answers: “I lie there, thinking ‘Yes, I understand.’ Thinking ‘For the last time.’ Thinking nothing. Listening to a high, clear, cold voice. My voice” (457). The

¹⁴⁸ The elliptical nature of Rhys’s narrative leaves this as an indirect implication rather than a narrativized fact, so I refer to the rape as both actual and threatened—much like the different kinds of dangers and violence alluded to in the other feminist baroque narratives in this study, which are always suspended between actual past and threatened future and therefore suspend the text and the characters *within* the trauma of the violence.

new voice tells René to take her money from the table, tells René that she understands that he must make a living, thereby deflecting the sexual attack by labeling René the prostitute, by claiming the position of buyer and therefore the more powerful positionality in the room. The submerged voice says “Don’t listen, that’s not me speaking. Don’t listen. Nothing to do with me—I swear it. . . .” (457, original ellipsis), but does not manage to overcome the voice speaking to René, which goes on to make fun of him as he leaves Sasha’s apartment.

After another space break in the text on the page, the chapter continues with a further wavering of the narrative voice, a destabilization that reintroduces the “she” from the beginning of the narrative:

I cry in the way that hurts right down, that hurts your heart and your stomach. Who is this crying? The same one who laughed on the landing, kissed him and was happy. This is me, this is myself, who is crying. The other—how do I know who the other is? She isn’t me. (458)

Importantly, the “submerged” Sasha is claiming her right to cry, finally. The repetition of “This is me, this is myself,” reinforces the constitution of a self that is claimed as “me.”

In this moment, the “she” who had taken over the narrative as “I” is being pushed out.

The interaction between these two voices becomes dramatic:

Her voice in my head: ‘Well, well, well, just think of that now. What an amusing ten days! Positively packed with thrills. The last performance of What’s-her-name And Her Boys or It Was All Due To An Old Fur Coat. Positively the last performance. . . . Go on, cry, allez-y. Encore. Tirez, as they say here. . . . [. . .]’ (458)

The “she” not only mocks Sasha, but goes on to mock the entire narrative we have been reading. By referring to “What’s-her-name,” the voice undermines Sasha’s attempts to name herself (since we already know that Sasha is a self-fashioned name). By repeating the word “performance,” the voice confirms Sasha’s fears: that someone is

always watching her, and that her every move must be planned out like a script. The tirade (dramatic monologue), which goes on to taunt Sasha about the money she has offered to René for his services (“Dirt cheap at the price, especially with the exchange the way it is”) as well as other purchases she has made on her visit, including Serge’s painting, is bracketed by quotation marks, representing a limitation of this voice, or at least signaling its clear division from Sasha—no longer entangled and shifting, the I/she split in the narrative is separated *definitively*.

The definitive split prepares Sasha for what she thinks will be the final blow of the evening: the loss of her money which she needs to get back to London. “She” taunts Sasha to go look on the table (“Go on, look. You might as well know”), but Sasha discovers that René has not taken the money. This prompts a celebration, a drink, which Sasha lifts to the gigolo: “Here’s to you, gigolo, chic gigolo” (459). Sasha then raises a drink to a “you” to end the chapter: “So here’s to you. And here’s to you. . . .” (459, original ellipsis). The double “you” in this last set of salutes suggests that Sasha is drinking—and saying goodbye—to the “she” as well as to René. This exit of “she” is explicitly announced at the start of the next chapter: “She has gone. I am alone” (460).

The exit of “she” from the narrative is important to consider when approaching the conclusion. The exit suggests that the Sasha who embraces the commis at the close of the text is the “me” who has allowed herself, finally, to cry. Rather than maintaining a split voice to foreclose Sasha from herself and others, as we have seen throughout, Sasha is “alone” and ready to turn *towards* another. She at first hopes that this other will be René, that he will turn around and come back to her room: “Come back, come back, come back. . . .” (461). And in this beckoning we might wonder if she isn’t also asking

“she” to come back to the narrative, to help her repress her vulnerability to feeling. But “she” doesn’t return, and Sasha must face what comes through her door, through the darkness.

This is where it is important to recall the opening of this final Part of the novel, when René unexpectedly appears where Sasha thought the commis would be standing, just outside her door. At the end, of course, the reverse happens: when Sasha expects—wishes for—René to come to her door and step through it, she receives, instead, the figure in the white dressing-gown. The confusion between René and the commis happens twice before the novel’s end, however. Besides the opening of the section, there is an important middle moment, between these two substitutions, when another kind of indeterminate wavering between the commis and René occurs. When Sasha earlier returns to her room and finds darkness on her landing, she moves towards the other body in the dark before she knows who it is. René later asks her about this: “Just now on the landing—you knew it was me?” (454), and Sasha assures him (and herself) that “of course” she knew it was René. But ambiguity, mirrors, and doubles throughout the narrative prod us to wonder whether Sasha really knew, or whether it even really mattered.

What happens in the final moments in the novel is that Sasha makes a decision: “I don’t need to look. I know” (461). She knows it is the commis—or she decides it is, or she decides that it does not matter. In the last lines of the text Sasha looks into the eyes of her fellow boarder who has tormented and mocked her throughout the narrative, who is not the man she wants to embrace, and whose emaciated, pale appearance and salesman occupation represent another kind of walking dead of the interwar. She narrates that she

“despise[s] another poor devil of a human being for the last time. For the last time. . . .” (462, original ellipsis). She then pulls the man to her and closes the novel with the declaration, “Yes—yes—yes. . . .” (462, original ellipsis). The combination of the ellipses and the surprising repetition of the positive, declarative “yes” ends the narrative in a simulacrum of the narrative aesthetic whole: repetition and void. The reader is thus left with both nothing and everything: what do we do with this ambiguity? With the disorienting enjambment of shame and hope? With the intimation of more of the same (shame and failure) to come? With the invocation of discursive space to *do something* with those lingering, resonating dots that simultaneously resist and repeat a period?

We might consider Mary Lou Emery’s approach to the final ambiguity in terms of liminality, just as all metaphors create “a liminal phase, that point in between the meaning of an old identity and the creation of a new one, the moment of emptiness that transformation requires” (*Jean Rhys* 170). Emery leaves the implications of the ending in this liminal zone with the lingering question: is it “Renewal or is it, like René’s technique, ‘possibly quite meaningless’?” (170). This question of significance versus meaninglessness is, after all, the fundamental question forced by baroque aesthetics: it is the “baroque dilemma” (Egginton 26). This question also situates *Good Morning, Midnight* as a limit case for modernism at the end of the interwar period. While modernism relies on the significance of forms as a kind of salvation from a collapsing modern world order, postmodernism insists on forms’ meaninglessness: (the hope of) modernity has already collapsed. Rhys’s text is an ironic recreation of the Exhibition, straining under the extremes of incommensurable ideologies, whose tentative display of unity only makes visible the fragmentation within, and thus the suspension of the time

and space of a colonial modernity seems poised to break up or collapse inward. Rhys's late modernist, feminist neobaroque narrative doesn't just leave Emery's question about meaning and meaninglessness as a question, however: it deliberately shifts it to the reader, who is left with three dots of an ellipsis on the page. The self-reflexive *mise en abyme* pattern extends to the reader, then, and both Sasha and the reader must engage with the conundrum—and must ultimately make a choice.

The conclusion to this dissertation will consider further the implications of *choice*, as well as how feminist baroque aesthetics can be read beyond the interwar context to facilitate a reader's engagement with the (im)possibilities of love amid relentless traditions of colonial violence and racial-patriarchal abuses of intimacies.

CONCLUSION: NEGOTIATING LOVE

“To have hope in feminism is to recognise that feminist visions of the future have not been realised in the present. The hope of feminism can stay alive, as that which moves and allows movement, not by letting the objects of feminist critique go, but by turning towards those very objects, as signs of the persistence of that which we are against in the present.” (Ahmed, The Cultural Politics of Emotion 187, original emphasis)

The choice that Rhys’s text—along with the other texts in this study—asks us to make is ultimately about love. About not only the possibility of love amid the overwhelming examples and experiences of exploitation and different forms of violence, but, importantly, about the ethical responsibility to *negotiate* the terms of love. Since at least Simone De Beauvoir’s consideration of how a woman is constructed as Other in the Hegelian master/slave dialectic, the feminist argument could be considered a pursuit of a particular kind of recognition, a recognition which affords women and other subjugated individuals or populations the right to choose, a right to negotiate (and refuse) the intimacy which is otherwise expected of or forced on them, including sex, marriage, and reproduction. What men, women, and governments recognized in the staggering number of war casualties, the growing gap between the sexes in census data, and the increasing threats of economic collapse and political revolutions in the decades after the Great War, however, was *death*. In such a crisis, the Other becomes a means to a future or the threat of extinction; the Other is, in short, the reminder of mortality.¹⁴⁹

In the rhetoric and policies regarding Surplus Women and Trafficked Women emerging in the 1920s, we see the panic of threatened survival as well as the desire to

¹⁴⁹ See De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, especially pp. 63-65. See also Pamela S. Anderson for discussion of De Beauvoir’s interpretation of Hegel for feminism in this sense about the recognition of mortality.

control the means for a future: “Man’s design is not to repeat himself in time: it is to take control of the instant and mold the future” (De Beauvoir, *Second Sex* 65). Walter Benjamin and other cultural critics of the interwar period recognized the resonances between the Baroque of the Counter-Reformation and the modernist aesthetics of the early twentieth century as aestheticizing this push and pull between recognition of death and a desire to *coerce* a future. D’Ors described this crisis dynamic in terms of cycling political and ideological clashes between the classicism of “Eternity” and the baroque vitalism of “Life” (84). This dissertation has argued that the manifestation of this crisis in the false choice presented in the rhetoric and practices of Surplus or Trafficked Women is traced by the feminist baroque narratives considered in this study, whose texts confront—push up against—the limits of white, middle-class womanhood. The feminist baroque is both an aesthetic and a reading practice that facilitates critical engagement with experiences of “excess” and “exclusion,” as well as recognition of the turbulent forces of “expansion” and “retraction” which configure not only baroque forms, but a baroque perspective of history.

The baroque rendering of pain, love, desire, and revelation in forms that suspend time and space *as well as* oppositional ideological forces is perhaps exemplified in Bernini’s *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa* (1647-1652), which is worth remembering in order to consider how a feminist baroque aesthetic *potential* might facilitate a particular kind of engagement and recognition for the spectator (see Figure 7 and Figure 8). In this sculpture by the Italian Baroque artist, we can see how the play of light and shadows, folds, perspective, and juxtaposed materials position the spectator for a complex emotional response relying on eroticism, vulnerability, faith, and fear. The marble statue

depicts the saint in the moment just before (or *between*, and thus producing an expanded temporal dimension to the experience) she is repeatedly pierced by the angel-Cupid's arrow. The statue is situated in the Cornaro Chapel in Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome, in such a way as to challenge notions of space itself: is the building a finite space, or is it infinite and connected to heaven? The billowing folds of fabric seem soft and pliable, and yet the spectator knows that they are made of stone, which disturbs the expectations that sensory experience should reinforce, rather than undermine, presumptions about reality. Teresa's slightly opened mouth, which literally and figuratively opens the figure to vulnerability and penetration by the spectator, suggests orgasm, a mixing of pain and bliss.



Figure 8: Close-up, *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* by Bernini, 1647-1652. Wikimedia Commons Photo Credit: Nina Aldin Thune.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Santa_Maria_della_Vittoria_-_6.jpg



Figure 7: Cornaro Chapel Cornaro chapel, Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome. Wikimedia Commons Photo Credit: Livioandronico2013.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cornaro_chapel_in_Santa_Maria_della_Vittoria_in_Rome_HDR.jpg

Howard Hibbard's study of Bernini emphasized the "breaking down of traditional and familiar boundaries" between different material techniques, delineations of space (and time), and even a transgression of boundaries between the spectator and the object in

the complex composition of space and forms in *The Ecstasy* (135). In this way, Bernini's baroque aesthetics also function as modernist expression, representing ruptures of tradition and refiguration of the experience of space and time through form. Importantly, Bernini's goal in this sculpture is not to merely depict but to *move* the spectator, even to generate an "hallucinatory revelation" like the one the saint described herself (Hibbard 134). Bernini's time-space disturbance, however, concentrates on vertical relationships of power rather than global ones. The seventeenth century Baroque in Rome might have moved a spectator to believe in (and therefore submit to or seek to resist) the power of the Church or the State via recognition of the *intimate demands of God's love*. The feminist baroque aesthetics described in this dissertation envelop and disturb a reader such that she recognizes the reach of racial-patriarchal and imperial demands across vertical, global, and temporal dimensions. In particular, a reader is moved to see her own and others' experiences as the result of relational politics that concentrate in intimate relationships while being manipulated by state, economic, and imperial forces. She re-sees history in terms of an aesthetically-induced personal disturbance. A revelation of history, of its abusive relationality, its coercions of intimacies.

The texts considered in this study ultimately reconfigure the passive roles of "minor" historical actors in the overwhelming circumstances of war, fascism, pogroms, racism and sexism as events of not just resistance, but also as opportunities for renegotiating intimacies. This renegotiation can only occur after recognition, recognition of intersubjectivity and responsibility. Feminist baroque aesthetics not only haunt but interrupt the transfer of history through patterns of coerced intimacy like marriage and reproduction, as well as through linear, authoritative, and single-voiced narrative

structures. Thus, these feminist baroque narratives transform aesthetic engagement into opportunities to recognize the risks of encounter, to question allegiances, and to encourage difficult choices about participation in projects which demand erasure of some perspective or some voice. Devices like *mise en abyme*, elliptical narratives and typography, and narrative uncertainty invite both participation and suspicion.

This reconfiguration of passive narrative consumption into an event of suspicious recognition stimulates *feminist* consciousness and work. The work of feminist activists, especially since the 1970s with the introduction of work from the Combahee River Collective and other queer feminists of color, has emphasized not only a “situated” but a dynamic intersubjective position from which to recognize the ethics and responsibility of “complex systems of oppression and privilege” (Fowlkes 106). This has implications for understanding the recognition and call to action that feminist baroque aesthetics can afford. For example, in her monumental speech, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” first given in 1979, Audre Lorde challenges her audience, made up of white feminist academics, “*to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there*” (113, original emphasis). She includes herself in an assembled “us” in this moment, bringing her audience and herself together to explore the “terror and loathing” of difference *together*: differences in race, sexuality, class, and age. She initiates, with this speech, an “interdependency” among women when they acknowledge differences that can be transformed into action and power, “not in order to be used, but in order to be creative” (111). That is, this feminist work of encounter will be different than the “master’s tools” if it doesn’t replicate the exclusions and inequalities, the patterns of

patriarchy that demand competition. The terror of encounter with difference and with difficulty “can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening” (111). In this dissertation, I have suggested that feminist baroque aesthetics can spark a collaborative project between text and reader when the feminist reader recognizes her own responsibility, a *product* of intersubjectivity. And in this recognition—this often uncomfortable and disturbing recognition—is the possibility of ethical, reciprocal negotiations of intimacy.

Considered in this way, this study introduces feminist baroque aesthetics as a discourse that can describe texts beyond the four examined here, and, importantly, beyond the limits of a modernism that re-negotiates white, middle class womanhood. Other narratives can also be considered in terms of feminist baroque aesthetics, especially those texts which, through innovative form, call attention to risky allegiances and facilitate self-consciousness about historical choices that compound material, embodied vulnerability. This study does not define a literary movement but rather an aesthetic *potential*. In the remainder of this conclusion I offer two brief examples of how feminist baroque aesthetics, as I have explored them in this study, might structure other twentieth and twenty-first century texts, and how the baroque *and* feminist principle of “situated” perspectives offers a framework for comparing experimental and feminist aesthetics across diverse historical contexts without erasing that diversity. In this way, we will see that the work of feminist baroque modernists, and the work *for* feminist engagement, expands far beyond the works considered in this dissertation.

Contemporaneous with the projects discussed in this study is Nella Larsen’s 1929 novel *Passing*, one of the key (and few) texts by women that has helped to define the

Harlem Renaissance in recent critical perspectives. The Harlem Renaissance was a cultural movement and moment (to paraphrase James and Seshagiri) that is often considered adjacent to, or another global dimension of, modernism, and which “imbued blackness with a specific cultural capital” (Kaplan x). Set in Chicago in the late 1920s, Larsen’s short novel focuses on the relationship between two women who meet coincidentally on the rooftop of the fictional Drayton Hotel after having lost contact with each other in childhood. The Drayton is a socially designated “white space” in a racially segregated United States. Irene and Clare are multiracial and have light complexions that allow them to “pass” into white spaces. Their “encounter”—as the first part of Larsen’s three-part narrative is called—in a white space as white women who knew each other in youth as “Negro” girls sets in motion a series of encounters that expose and challenge desires shaped by racial patriarchy. Clare and Irene’s lives literally trace the outside and inside of safe, white, middle-class womanhood exemplified in the rhetoric surrounding Surplus Women introduced in this dissertation as they pass for white, middle-class housewives, and as they find that they cannot. Larsen’s text, like those considered in this dissertation, suspends oppositional forces of desire and fear, attraction and repulsion, in order to recreate the turbulent and often abusive dynamics of colonial and national identity formation. Larsen’s American and racial segregation context provides a distinct set of sexual-racial panic and paranoia that distinguishes this novel from the interwar European contexts of the texts foregrounded in this dissertation.

At the sentence level, Larsen’s text is not overtly “baroque” in the sense of discursive difficulty. It is the text’s subtle and oppositional movements between seduction and resistance, however, that can be considered for their feminist baroque

capability. And, it is worth noting, Larsen's own positionality as a multiracial, dark-skinned woman contributing to a male-dominated Harlem Renaissance in a white supremacist national context has everything to do with the *necessity* for subtleness. The opening lines of the novel offer metafictional commentary on (and hints about) the text's multilayered performative trickery:

It was the last letter in Irene Redfield's little pile of morning mail. After her other ordinary and clearly directed letters the long envelope of thin Italian paper with its almost illegible scrawl seemed out of place and alien. And there was, too, something mysterious and slightly furtive about it. A thin sly thing which bore no return address to betray the sender. Not that she hadn't immediately known who its sender was. (Larsen 5)

Though syntactically conservative, these lines are weighted heavily by double-meanings and allusive puzzles that circle back to describe the text itself, but also to describe the seductive danger of Clare Kendry. Like the envelope which is so obsessively described in this passage, Clare Kendry is "a thin sly thing," as the narrative will go on to suggest, but so is the novel in the reader's hand. The narrative voice, however, in its ostensible objectivity, is also both thin and sly, seducing the reader into its representation of Clare's duplicity. While, on one hand, we are to understand that the envelope stands in for the "mysterious and slightly furtive" performance of Clare who has "passed" the color line that divides American society and who lives as a married white woman and mother of a white child, it is the narrative itself which *passes* as "ordinary and clearly directed." Like Felix Volkbein in *Nightwood*, who ostentatiously generates a non-Jewish identity, Clare's inevitable *failure* to pass is what constitutes her central interest as a character in the narrative. It is the (im)possibility of passing which both Barnes's text and Larsen's text investigate, the limits of performativity to generate *authoritative* or *safe* signification.

Later in the text when Clare and Irene's initial "encounter" on the rooftop café in Chicago is described, the relationship of desire to safety is routed through the American ideology of "having" (Larsen 14), which entangles race, gender, and class in an impossible pursuit of an ever-receding horizon, literalized for Irene at the end of a hot summer day in Chicago:

The tea, when it came, was all that [Irene] had desired and expected. In fact, so much was it what she had desired and expected that after the first deep cooling drink she was able to forget it, only now and then sipping, a little absently, from the tall green glass, while she surveyed the room about her or looked out over some lower buildings at the bright unstirred blue of the lake reaching away to an undetected horizon. (8-9)

Just before Irene and Clare recognize each other—and recognize that they are both passing—Irene experiences a satisfying moment in which she inhabits a place of privilege in the American landscape, sitting literally on top of society. Importantly, this is immediately before the moment of recognition between Clare and Irene, the turning point in the narrative when the reader first understands that Irene is not white. Passing is thus introduced as potentially *disidentifactory*, "a third modality where a dominant structure is co-opted, worked on and against" (Muñoz 108), at the level of narrative as well as at the level of social experience. Larsen's tricky text structures a disidentifactory relationship for the reader as well as for Irene. Irene's occupation of white privilege is potentially disidentifactory because it doesn't merely protest or sell-out to white supremacy along a binary choice; it moves within it while also undermining its *a posteriori* terms.

Like Djuna Barnes's deconstructive rejoinder to Jean Cocteau's "trick factory" theory of *performance*, which establishes a dualistic vision of reality that can be manipulated but not undone, Larsen's text demonstrates that *performativity* has the potential to change the terms through which space is defined. However, as the narrative

goes on to describe Irene's relationship to the scene as well as to the historical moment, the transformational potential of passing becomes tenuous. Irene's perceptions of desire, safety, and *self* gradually reveal themselves as serving a *national project*, which is symbolized in the scene on the rooftop café: Irene's comfort is both confirmed and undermined by "the bright unstirred blue of the lake reaching away to an undetected horizon." In other words, Larsen's feminist baroque text facilitates a complex critique of the aesthetic and affective attachments that not only shape Irene's ability to see and feel her own body and those of others, but also shape the reader's relationship to the text. A (feminist) reader can recognize this as the "vanishing point" of American identity which is constituted through racial, sexual, and class exclusions. This scene thus also configures an "abyss" that will be repeated and referenced across the text as another kind of *mise en abyme*: a pursuit of legitimacy that is not so much achieved but *suspended* through attachments scattered across a receding horizon.

Postcolonial experimental narratives of twentieth and twenty-first centuries might *especially* invoke feminist resistance and interdependency at the level of narrative experience. These postcolonial texts are often explicit expressions of tensions between colonial-patriarchal pasts and futures, and as such they offer baroque perspectives of modernity. Jamaica Kincaid's 2002 novel *Mr. Potter* offers a retrospective narrative of the narrator's father who was absent from her life. Kincaid herself is a kind of "postcolonial orphan" who invented a name for herself to both deny and recuperate her familial and colonial past, like Sasha Jansen in *Good Morning, Midnight*—and like Jean Rhys herself.¹⁵⁰ Kincaid's novel is an example of Caribbean modernism which writes

150 Julin Everett uses the term "postcolonial orphan" to describe the autobiographical narratives of Kincaid and other postcolonial writers. "Jamaica Kincaid" is an assumed name for Elaine Potter Richardson, who

back through modernist forms to reconstitute identity which has been fractured through slavery and globalization; thus Kincaid's "diasporic citizenship" is both similar and different to Rhys's interwar colonial cosmopolitanism, suspending incommensurable identities and political or economic agendas in a psychic-spatial tension (Forbes 17).

Tracing her father's "illegitimate" upbringing, the narrator, Elaine, painstakingly navigates her own disaffections, accumulating details only to undermine them in what Gayatri Spivak has called a "paratactic" narrative style (qtd. in Matos 83). Kincaid's elegiac narrative is therefore like and not like Bowen's *The Last September*: both discourses represent the demands of filiation and the strangling emotional and psychological strains that colonial relationships put on individuals and families, creating an impossible desire for intimacy which is always already ruined. But Kincaid's focus on the multi-generational impacts of British colonialism—including its lingering beyond the technical fall of the Empire—emphasize a different kind of colonial ruination that, rather than holding them within a Big House in order to fortify an impossible internal identity, casts Elaine's family across the globe, refusing not just stable ground or love but even the language nostalgia.

Kincaid's repetition of "And . . ." to begin sentences in *Mr. Potter* not only confuses a reader's sense of beginnings or endings or hierarchies of significance but also conveys this colonial history—of a life lived on a small British-controlled Caribbean Island as the descendants of slaves—as accretive, as stacked instances of *results* without explicit indication of an originary *cause*. The missing center (imperialism, then and now) in *Mr. Potter* also functions stylistically and ideologically like Miss La Trobe's missing

was born in Antigua. Jean Rhys also transformed her name—born Ella Gwendolyn Rees Williams in Dominica.

British army in Woolf's *Between the Acts*, or like the missing narrative explanation for the tears that stream down Sasha Jansen's face when she is forced to watch Serge's "African" dance in Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*. By removing these actors or explanations from the texts, Kincaid, Woolf, and Rhys don't simply "erase" their significance but rather shift it to the relationality of multiply contributing actions and actors in the vast and, some might say, *baroque* nature of imperialism.

Importantly, across all these diverse texts, different affiliates of what I have called colonial-patriarchy emerge from benign sites to torment, confuse, or merely distract: fathers, policemen, landladies, lovers, and so on. While on one hand the narratives seem to create "gaps" that might be easily filled in—a dynamic familiar to feminist critiques and descriptions of feminine writing—on the other hand, the diffusive and evasive textual tactics in these feminist *baroque* texts create a momentum that prevents something like substitution or insertion of a single, dominant idea. This is the baroque principle of "recession," if we return to Wölfflin's 1915 taxonomy. The narrative aesthetic effect is to demand a reader's participation but elude objectification or totalization. In the case of these feminist baroque texts, the reader is not only invited but *implicated* by the narrative, having to *negotiate with* the aesthetic effect as an active, situated participant.

Kincaid's narrative overwhelms the reader with "paratactic and subjunctive structurings [that] act together to form a world that proliferates horizontally" (Matos 91). And this horizontal proliferation scatters time, backwards and forwards, as feelings that sit side by side:

And on a day such as that: Nathaniel Potter could hear the faint sound of all that had been capricious and had come to make up his life: his children and their mothers, his ancestors from some of the many places that make up Africa and from somewhere in England and from somewhere in Scotland. And the faint

sound of all that he was made of caused him to grow angry, caused him to grow almost happy and curious but then angry again, and the anger welled up in him and he was all alone in the world, the world that refused to bear any trace of the capriciousness of history or the capriciousness of memory, the world that had passed away. (Kincaid 39-40)

In this passage, punctuation and syntax spread out rather than subordinate meaning, mimicking the centrifugal dynamics of the expansionist British empire. For Elaine and her father's familial line, this spread is punctuated by particular place names that signify not as national identities but global coordinates that confirm colonial alienation rather than a sense of familiarity. The turning of emotions from anger to happiness back to anger mark a shift between centrifugal and centripetal forces that cast Elaine's family about a world that refuses to acknowledge them. The narrator's attempts to write her father's life—to write a life for her father—expresses a personal desire, performatively recreated through the narrative style: an impossible pursuit of love, of meaning.

Like Larsen's *Passing*, or as in Barnes's *Nightwood* when Dr. O'Connor assures his audience that his story has a meaning, even if difficult to find, the multilayered trickery of Kincaid's narrative is metafictionally commented upon within the text:

Can a human being exist in a wilderness, a world so empty of human feeling: love and justice: a world in which love and even that, justice, only exist from time to time and in small quantities, or unexpectedly like a wild seedling of some necessary and common food (rice would do, or corn would do, or grain of any kind)? The answer is yes and yes again and the answer is no, not really, not so at all. (72)

These metafictional moves, as I have said elsewhere, implicate a reader's *presence* and *responsibility* vis-à-vis the text itself. In this case, the narrator asks herself and the reader to consider the "wilderness" of history as recreated in the text of the narrative, one in which love and justice are sporadic and uneven. And the expectation that meaning should be as fundamental as food is *unreliable*. Depending on one's *perspective*, the answer to

the proffered question is yes or no: a human being can/not exist under these conditions. Like Audre Lorde's invocation to an "us" in her call to action, Kincaid reminds the reader of *difference* that must be recognized and addressed as the basis of any negotiated, reciprocal, and egalitarian intersubjectivity. And for Elaine, establishing the differences between herself and her father(s) allows her to process his physical and emotional distance on the occasion of his life *and* death. The ambiguous *irresolution* in the passage—like the ambiguous narrative endings of the texts in this study—resists expectations of a neat or convenient structure to interrogation, however. These narratives all leave *us* with the sense that *there is always more work to do*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abel, Elizabeth. "Women and Schizophrenia: The Fiction of Jean Rhys." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1979, pp. 155–77.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford UP, 1998.
- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. 2nd ed., Edinburgh UP, 2014.
- Anderson, Pamela Sue. "Life, Death and (Inter)Subjectivity: Realism and Recognition in Continental Feminism." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 60, no. 1–3, Springer Nature, Dec. 2006, pp. 41–59.
- Antliff, Mark. "Classical Violence: Thierry Maulnier, French Fascist Aesthetics and the 1937 Paris World's Fair." *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 15, no. 1, Feb. 2008, pp. 45–62.
- Badiou, Alain. *Being and Event*. Translated by Oliver Feltham, Continuum, 2007.
- Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist, Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, U of Texas P, 1981.
- Bal, Mieke. *A Mieke Bal Reader*. U of Chicago P, 2006.
- . *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History*. U of Chicago P, 1999.
- Barnes, Djuna. *Collected Poems: With Notes toward the Memoirs*. Edited by Phillip F. Herring and Osias Stutman, U of Wisconsin P, 2005.
- . *Nightwood*. New Directions, 2006.
- Bartie, Angela, et al. "The Redress of the Past: Historical Pageants in Twentieth-Century England." *Yearbook of the International Society of History Didactics / Jahrbuch Der Internationalen Gesellschaft Für Geschichtsdidaktik*, vol. 37, Jan. 2016, pp. 19–35.
- Beaumont, Francis. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. Edited by Sheldon P. Zitner, Manchester UP, 2004.

- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Edited by Hannah Arendt, Translated by Harry Zohn, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968.
- . *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Translated by John Osborne, Verso, 2003.
- Bennett, Andrew, and Nicholas Royle. *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel: Still Lives*. St. Martin's P, 1994.
- Benstock, Shari. "Expatriate Sapphic Modernism Entering Literary History." *Rereading Modernism: New Directions in Feminist Criticism*, edited by Lisa Rado, Garland, 1994, pp. 97–121.
- . *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940*. 1st ed., U of Texas P, 1986.
- Berman, Jessica Schiff. "Ethical Folds: Ethics, Aesthetics, Woolf." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2004, pp. 151–72.
- . *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism*. Columbia UP, 2011.
- . *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Community*. Cambridge UP, 2001.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
- Bockting, Margaret. "The Great War and Modern Gender Consciousness: The Subversive Tactics of Djuna Barnes." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, vol. 30, no. 3, Sept. 1997, pp. 21–38.
- Bowen, Elizabeth. *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters*. Vintage, 2017.
- . *People, Places, Things: Essays by Elizabeth Bowen*. Edited by Allan Hepburn, Edinburgh : Edinburgh UP, 2010.
- . *The Last September*. Anchor, 2000.

- . *The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen*. Edited by Hermione Lee, San Diego :
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987.
- Bowlby, Rachel. *Still Crazy After All These Years: Women, Writing, and Psychoanalysis*.
Routledge, 1992.
- Bradbury, Malcolm, and James Walter McFarlane, editors. *Modernism: A Guide to European
Literature 1890 - 1930*. Reprinted with a new preface, Penguin Books, 1991.
- Braidotti, Rosi. *Patterns of Dissonance*. Routledge, 1991.
- Breton, André. *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. U of Michigan P, 1972.
- Britzolakis, Christina. "'This Way to the Exhibition': Genealogies of Urban Spectacle in Jean
Rhys's Interwar Fiction." *Textual Practice*, vol. 21, no. 3, Sept. 2007, pp. 457–82.
- Bromfield, Nicole F. "Sex Slavery and Sex Trafficking of Women in the United States:
Historical and Contemporary Parallels, Policies, and Perspectives in Social Work."
Affilia, vol. 31, no. 1, Feb. 2016, pp. 129–39.
- Brown, Matthew. "Strange Associations: Elizabeth Bowen and the Language of Exclusion."
Irish Studies Review, vol. 20, no. 1, Feb. 2012, pp. 3–24.
- Buci-Glucksmann, Christine. *Madness of Vision: On Baroque Aesthetics*. Ohio UP, 2013.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Tenth Anniversary Edition*. Routledge, 1999.
- Calloway, Stephen. *Baroque Baroque: The Culture of Excess*. Phaidon, 1994.
- Camarasana, Linda. "Exhibitions and Repetitions: Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* and
the World of Paris, 1937." *At Home and Abroad in the Empire: British Women Write the
1930s*, U of Delaware P, 2009, pp. 51–70.
- Carlston, Erin G. *Thinking Fascism: Sapphic Modernism and Fascist Modernity*. Stanford UP,
1998.

- Casey, Janet Galligani. *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine*. Cambridge UP, 1998.
- Caughie, Pamela L. *Virginia Woolf & Postmodernism: Literature in Quest & Question of Itself*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1991.
- Caws, Mary Ann. *The Surrealist Look: An Erotics of Encounter*. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. P, 1997.
- Chanter, Tina. *Art, Politics, and Rancière: Broken Perceptions*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.
- Christie, Stuart. "Willing Epigone: Virginia Woolf's Between the Acts as Nietzschean Historiography." *Woolf Studies Annual*, vol. 8, 2002 2002, pp. 157–74.
- Clark, Alex. "Between the Acts: Virginia Woolf's Last Book."
<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20160321-between-the-acts-virginia-woolfs-last-book>.
 Accessed 28 June 2019.
- Cohler, Deborah. *Citizen, Invert, Queer: Lesbianism and War in Early Twentieth-Century Britain*. U of Minnesota P, 2010.
- Compton-Burnett, Ivy. *More Women than Men*. Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1948.
- Corcoran, Neil. *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return*. Oxford UP, 2004.
- Crowson, Lydia. "Cocteau and 'Le Numéro Barquette.'" *Modern Drama*, vol. 19, no. 1, Mar. 1976, pp. 79–87.
- Cullingford, Elizabeth. "'Something Else': Gendering Onliness in Elizabeth Bowen's Early Fiction." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2007, pp. 276–305.
- d'Ors, Eugenio. "Excerpts from 'The Debate on the Baroque in Pontigny.'" Zamora and Kaup, pp. 78–92.
- Dällenbach, Lucien. *The Mirror in the Text*. Polity P, 1989.
- De Beauvoir, Simone.

- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Translated by Bernard Frechtman, Philosophical Library, 2015.
- . *The Second Sex*. Translated by Howard Madison Parshley, Vintage Books, 1989.
- Degenhardt, Jane Hwang. "The Reformation, Inter-Imperial World History, and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*." *PMLA*, vol. 130, no. 2, Mar. 2015, pp. 402–11.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. U of Minnesota P, 1987.
- . *Kafka : Toward a Minor Literature*. U of Minnesota P, 1986.
- Derrida, Jacques, and Anne Dufourmantelle. *Of Hospitality*. Translated by Rachel Bowlby, Stanford UP, 2000.
- Detloff, Madelyn. "Thinking Peace into Existence: The Spectacle of History in Between the Acts." *Women's Studies*, vol. 28, no. 4, Sept. 1999, pp. 403-33.
- DiBattista, Maria. "Elizabeth Bowen's Troubled Modernism." *Modernism and Colonialism: British and Irish Literature, 1899-1939*, ed. and introd. by Richard Begam and Michael Valdez Moses, Duke UP, 2007, pp. 226–45.
- Dimock, Wai Chee. "Weak Theory: Henry James, Colm Tóibín, and W. B. Yeats." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 39, no. 4, June 2013, pp. 732–53.
- Disraeli, Benjamin. "The Maintenance of Empire." *Wikisource*.
https://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=The_Maintenance_of_Empire&oldid=2953160. Accessed 3 Mar 2020.
- Doan, Laura L., and Jane Garrity. *Sapphic Modernities: Sexuality, Women, and National Culture*. First edition., Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Dolan, Jill. *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*. U of Michigan P, 2012.

- Donovan, Brian. *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917*. U of Illinois P, 2006.
- Dos Passos, John. *U.S.A. Trilogy: I. The 42nd Parallel. II. Nineteen Nineteen. III. The Big Money*. Modern library, 1937.
- Doyle, Laura. *Bordering on the Body: The Racial Matrix of Modern Fiction and Culture*. Oxford UP, 1994.
- Doyle, Laura, and Laura A. Winkiel, editors. *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity*. Indiana UP, 2005.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture*. Verso, 1995.
- Eco, Umberto. *The Open Work*. Harvard UP, 1989.
- Egginton, William. *The Theater of Truth: The Ideology of (Neo)Baroque Aesthetics*. Stanford UP, 2009.
- Ellis, Steve. *British Writers and the Approach of World War II*. Cambridge UP, 2015.
- Ellmann, Maud. *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow across the Page*. Edinburgh UP, 2003.
- . "Everyday War: Sylvia Townsend Warner and Virginia Woolf in World War II." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 50, no. 1, May 2017, pp. 77–96.
- Emery, Mary Lou. "Caribbean Modernism: Plantation to Planetary." *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, edited by Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough, Oxford UP, 2012, pp. 48–77.
- . *Jean Rhys at "World's End": Novels of Colonial and Sexual Exile*. U of Texas P, 1990.
- Esty, Joshua. *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England*. Princeton UP, 2004.

---. "Virgins of Empire: *The Last September* and the Antidevelopment Plot." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2007, pp. 257–75.

Everett, Julin. "The Postcolonial Orphan's Autobiography: Authoring the Self in Jamaica Kincaid's *Mr. Potter* and Calixthe Beyala's *La Petite Fille Du Réverbère*." *College Literature: A Journal of Critical Literary Studies*, vol. 36, no. 3, Johns Hopkins UP, 2009.

Farfan, Penny. "Writing/Performing: Virginia Woolf Between the Acts." *Text & Performance Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 3, July 1996, p. 205-15.

Felski, Rita. *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*. New York UP, 2000.

---. *The Gender of Modernity*. Harvard UP, 1995.

Flynn, Nicole. "Clockwork Women: Temporality and Form in Jean Rhys's Interwar Novels." *Rhys Matters: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. and introd. by Mary Wilson et al., Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 41–65.

Forbes, Curdella. "Fracturing Subjectivities: International Space and the Discourse of Individualism in Colin Channer's *Waiting in Vain* and Jamaica Kincaid's *Mr. Potter*." *Small Axe*, vol. 12, no. 1, Duke UP, Mar. 2008, pp. 16–37.

Forrest, Jennifer. "Cocteau Au Cirque: The Poetics of Parade and 'Le Numéro Barbette.'" *Studies in Twentieth and Twenty First Century Literature*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2003 Winter 2003, pp. 9–47.

Forster, E. M. *A Passage to India*. Edited by Oliver Stallybrass, Penguin, 2005.

Foster, Gavin M. *The Irish Civil War and Society: Politics, Class, and Conflict*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

- Fowlkes, Diane L. "Moving from Feminist Identity Politics to Coalition Politics through a Feminist Materialist Standpoint of Intersubjectivity in Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*." *Hypatia*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1997, pp. 105–24.
- Frank, Joseph. "Spatial Form in Modern Literature." *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*, ed. and introd. by Michael J. Hoffman and Patrick D. Murphy, Duke UP, 1996, pp. 63–76.
- Franko, Mark. "Where He Danced: Cocteau's Barbettes and Ohno's Water Lilies." *PMLA*, vol. 107, no. 3, 1992, pp. 594–607.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. *Planetary Modernisms : Provocations on Modernity Across Time*. Columbia UP, 2015.
- Froula, Christine. *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde: War, Civilization, Modernity*. Columbia UP, 2005.
- Gardiner, Judith Kegan. "Good Morning, Midnight; Good Night, Modernism." *Boundary 2*, vol. 11, no. 1/2, Fall82/Winter83 1982, pp. 233–51.
- Garrity, Jane. *Step-Daughters of England: British Women Modernists and the National Imaginary*. Manchester UP ; Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave, 2003.
- Gerstenberger, Donna. "Modern (Post) Modern: Djuna Barnes among the Others." *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, no. 3, 1993, pp. 33–40.
- Gerwarth, Robert, editor. *Twisted Paths: Europe 1914-1945*. Oxford UP, 2007.
- Gerzina, Gretchen Holbrook. "Virginia Woolf, Performing Race." *The Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, Edinburgh UP, 2010, pp. 74–87.
- Gikandi, Simon. "Preface: Modernism in the World." *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2006, pp. 419–24.

- Glavey, Brian. "Dazzling Estrangement: Modernism, Queer Ekphrasis, and the Spatial Form of *Nightwood*." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 124, no. 3, May 2009, pp. 749–61.
- Glendinning, Victoria. *Elizabeth Bowen*. Anchor Books, 2006.
- Goldman, Jane. *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf: Modernism, Post-Impressionism, and the Politics of the Visual*. Cambridge UP, 1998.
- Goodspeed-Chadwick, Julie. *Modernist Women Writers and War: Trauma and the Female Body in Djuna Barnes, H. D., and Gertrude Stein*. Louisiana State UP, 2011.
- Gorman, Daniel. "Empire, Internationalism, and the Campaign against the Traffic in Women and Children in the 1920s." *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. 19, no. 2, June 2008, pp. 186–216.
- Goulimari, Pelagia. "A Minoritarian Feminism? Things to Do with Deleuze and Guattari." *Hypatia*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1999, pp. 97–120.
- Grady, Hugh. *John Donne and Baroque Allegory: The Aesthetics of Fragmentation*. Cambridge UP, 2017.
- Greeley, Robin Adèle. "Image, Text and the Female Body: Rene Magritte and the Surrealist Publications." *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 15, no. 2, Jan. 1992, pp. 48–57.
- Greene, Sally. "Entering Woolf's Renaissance Imaginary: A Second Look at *The Second Common Reader*." *Virginia Woolf and the Essay*, edited by Beth Carol Rosenberg and Jeanne Dubino, St. Martin's, 1998, pp. 81–95.
- Greenfield, Thelma N. *The Induction in Elizabethan Drama*. Eugene: U of Oregon Books, 1969.

- Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1988 Fall 1988, pp. 575–99.
- Harker, Ben. "'On Different Levels Ourselves Went Forward': Pageantry, Class Politics and Narrative Form in Virginia Woolf's Late Writing." *ELH*, vol. 78, no. 2, Summer 2011, pp. 433–56.
- Harris, H. Wilson. *Human Merchandise: A Study of the International Traffic in Women*. E. Benn Limited, 1928.
- Hawcroft, Michael. "Gide's Corydon, 'Mise en Abyme,' and Autobiographical Fiction." *Nottingham French Studies*, vol. 33, no. 2, Fall 1994, pp. 47–54.
- Hemingway, Ernest. *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Macmillan Collector's Library, 2016.
- Henke, Suzette A. "Modernism and Trauma." *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers*, edited by Maren Tova Linett, Cambridge UP, 2010, pp. 160–71.
- Hibbard, Howard. *Bernini*. 1965. Penguin Books, 1990.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991*. 1st American ed., Pantheon Books, 1994.
- hoogland, renée c. *Elizabeth Bowen: A Reputation in Writing*. NYU P, 1994.
- Hussey, Mark. "'I' Rejected, 'We' Substituted': Self and Society in Between the Acts." *Reading and Writing Women's Lives: A Study of the Novel of Manners*, edited by Bege K. Bowers and Barbara Brothers, Univ. Microfilms Internat. Research P, 1990, pp. 141–52.
- . "Introduction." *Between the Acts*. Cambridge UP, 2011.
- Huyssen, Andreas. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*. Indiana UP, 1986.

- James, David, and Urmila Seshagiri. "Metamodernism: Narratives of Continuity and Revolution." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 129, no. 1, Jan. 2014, pp. 87–100.
- Jardine, Alice. "Woman in Limbo: Deleuze and His Br[Others]." *SubStance: A Review of Theory and Literary Criticism*, vol. 13, no. 3-4 [44-45], 1984, pp. 46–60.
- Johnson, Erica L. "Haunted: Affective Memory in Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*." *Affirmations: Of the Modern*, vol. 1, no. 2, Mar. 2014, pp. 15–38.
- Johnson, Kaylee. "Whitewashed: The Racialization of America's Middle Class Identity." University of Massachusetts Amherst, PhD dissertation, July 2019.
- Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Dover Publications, 2002.
- Judovitz, Dalia. *The Culture of the Body: Genealogies of Modernity*. U of Michigan P, 2000.
- Kaivola, Karen. "The 'Beast Turning Human': Constructions of the 'primitive' in *Nightwood*. (Djuna Barnes)." *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, no. 3, 1993, pp. 172–82.
- Kalliney, Peter J. *Modernism in a Global Context*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.
- Kant, Immanuel. *On Perpetual Peace*. Broadview P, 2015.
- Kaplan, Alice Yaeger. *Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature, and French Intellectual Life*. U of Minnesota P, 1986.
- Kaplan, Carla. "Introduction: Nella Larsen's Erotics of Race." *Passing: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*, Norton Critical Editions, Norton, 2007, pp. ix–xxviii.
- Kargon, Robert H. *World's Fairs on the Eve of War: Science, Technology, and Modernity, 1937–1942*. U of Pittsburgh P, 2015.

- Kaup, Monika. *Neobaroque in the Americas: Alternative Modernities in Literature, Visual Art, and Film*. U of Virginia P, 2012.
- Keown, Edwina. "Exorcising Trauma: Uncanny Modernity and the Anglo-Irish War in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September* (1929)." *Études Irlandaises*, no. 36–1, June 2011, pp. 131–46.
- Kincaid, Jamaica. *Mr. Potter*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002.
- Knepper, Paul. "The Investigation into the Traffic in Women by the League of Nations: Sociological Jurisprudence as an International Social Project." *Law and History Review*, vol. 34, no. 1, Feb. 2016, pp. 45–73.
- Kreilkamp, Vera. *The Anglo-Irish Novel and the Big House*. Syracuse UP, 1998.
- Kunitz, Stanley, editor. *Authors Today and Yesterday, a Companion Volume to Living Authors*. The H.W. Wilson Company, 1933. *Hathi Trust*, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001964282>.
- Lambert, Gregg. *On the (New) Baroque*. The Davies Group, Publishers, 2009.
- Larsen, Nella. *Passing: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*. Edited by Carla Kaplan, Norton Critical Editions, Norton, 2007.
- Latham, Sean, and Gayle Rogers. *Modernism: Evolution of an Idea*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.
- Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford UP, 2005.
- Lawrence, David Herbert. *Women in Love*. Dent, 1993.
- Lee, Hermione. *Elizabeth Bowen, an Estimation*. Barnes & Noble, 1981.

- Levine, Philippa. "The White Slave Trade and the British Empire." *Crime, Gender, and Sexuality in Criminal Prosecutions*, edited by Louis A. Knafla, Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002, pp. 133–46.
- Levitan, Kathrin. "Redundancy, the 'Surplus Woman' Problem, and the British Census, 1851–1861." *Women's History Review*, vol. 17, no. 3, July 2008, pp. 359–76.
- Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Crossing P, 2007.
- Love, Heather. *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Harvard UP, 2007.
- Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Duke UP, 2015.
- Lukács, György. *The Theory of the Novel; A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*. M.I.T. P, 1971.
- Lupton, Julia Reinhard. "Creature Caliban." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 1, Johns Hopkins UP, 2000 Spring 2000, pp. 1–23.
- Lyford, Amy. *Surrealist Masculinities: Gender Anxiety and the Aesthetics of Post-World War I Reconstruction in France*. Berkeley : U of California P, 2007.
- MacKay, Marina. "Putting the House in Order: Virginia Woolf and Blitz Modernism." *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 66, no. 2, June 2005, pp. 227–52.
- Mao, Douglas, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, editors. *Bad Modernisms*. Duke UP Books, 2006.
- . "The New Modernist Studies." *PMLA*, vol. 123, no. 3, May 2008, pp. 737–48.
- Maravall, José Antonio. *Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of a Historical Structure*. U of Minnesota P, 1986.
- Marcus, Jane. *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race*. Rutgers UP, 2004.

- Marshik, Celia. "Publication and 'Public Women': Prostitution and Censorship in Three Novels by Virginia Woolf." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 45, no. 4, 1999, pp. 853–86.
- Maslen, Cathleen. *Ferocious Things: Jean Rhys and the Politics of Women's Melancholia*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.
- Massumi, Brian. "The Autonomy of Affect." *Cultural Critique*, no. 31, 1995, pp. 83–109.
- Matos, Nicole. "In the Vicinity of the Land of the Almost: The Stylistics of Jamaica Kincaid's *Mr. Potter*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 44, no. 1, Mar. 2009, pp. 81–99.
- McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. Routledge, 1995.
- Meghji, Ali. *Black Middle Class Britannia : Identities, Repertoires, Cultural Consumption*. Manchester UP, 2019.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Colin Smith, Routledge, 2002.
- Mickalites, Carey James. "Good Morning, Midnight: Jean Rhys's Melancholic Late Modernism." *Modernism and Market Fantasy*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012, pp. 170–95.
- Morrow, John Howard. *The Great War: An Imperial History*. Psychology P, 2005.
- "About." *Modernist Studies Association (MSA)*. <https://msa.press.jhu.edu/about/index.html>. Accessed 10 Feb. 2020.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. U of Minnesota P, 1999.

- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Being Singular Plural*. Stanford UP, 2000.
- Newman, Jane O. *Benjamin's Library: Modernity, Nation, and the Baroque*. Cornell UP, 2011.
- O'Brien, Anne. "Catholic Nuns in Transnational Mission, 1528–2015." *Journal of Global History*, vol. 11, no. 3, Nov. 2016, pp. 387–408.
- Parsons, Deborah. "Djuna Barnes: Melancholic Modernism." *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel*, edited by Morag Shiach and Suzanne Hobson, Cambridge UP, 2007, pp. 165–77.
- Pérez, Hiram. *A Taste for Brown Bodies: Gay Modernity and Cosmopolitan Desire*. NYU P, 2015.
- Pliley, Jessica R. "Claims to Protection: The Rise and Fall of Feminist Abolitionism in the League of Nations' Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, 1919–1936." *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 22, no. 4, Dec. 2010, pp. 90–113.
- Plumb, Cheryl. "Revising *Nightwood*: 'a Kind of Glee of Despair.' (Djuna Barnes)." *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, no. 3, 1993, pp. 149–59.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone." *Profession*, 1991 1991, pp. 33–40.
- Rado, Lisa, editor. *Modernism, Gender, and Culture: A Cultural Studies Approach*. Garland Pub, 1997.
- Rancière, Jacques. "Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization." *October*, vol. 61, 1992, pp. 58–64.
- . *The Emancipated Spectator*. Translated by Gregory Elliott, Verso, 2009.
- Rhys, Jean. *Jean Rhys: The Complete Novels*. W W Norton & Co Inc, 1985.
- Richardson, Dorothy M. *Pilgrimage*. Knopf, 1967.

- Ritter, Naomi. "Art and Androgyny: The Aerialist." *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1989 Summer 1989, pp. 173–93.
- Rosenberg, Leah. "Caribbean Models for Modernism in the Work of Claude McKay and Jean Rhys." *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 11, no. 2, Apr. 2004, pp. 219–38.
- Rosenfeld, Natania. "Monstrous Conjugations: Images of Dictatorship in the Anti-Fascist Writings of Virginia and Leonard Woolf." *Virginia Woolf and Fascism: Resisting the Dictators' Seduction*, edited by Merry M. Pawlowski and Jane Marcus, Palgrave, 2001, pp. 122–36.
- Ruotolo, Lucio P. *The Interrupted Moment: A View of Virginia Woolf's Novels*. Stanford UP, 1986.
- Saint-Amour, Paul K. *Tense Future : Modernism, Total War, Encyclopedic Form*. Oxford UP, 2015.
- . "Weak Theory, Weak Modernism." *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 25, no. 3, Sept. 2018, pp. 437–59.
- Santner, Eric L. *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald*. U of Chicago P, 2006.
- Scott, Bonnie Kime, editor. *Gender in Modernism: New Geographies, Complex Intersections*. U of Illinois P, 2007.
- . *Refiguring Modernism*. Indiana UP, 1995.
- , editor. *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*. Indiana UP, 1990.
- Scott, Maria. "Lacan's 'Of the Gaze as Objet Petit a' as Anamorphic Discourse." *Paragraph*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2008, pp. 327–43.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Duke UP, 2003.

- Seshagiri, Urmila. "Modernist Ashes, Postcolonial Phoenix: Jean Rhys and the Evolution of the English Novel in the Twentieth Century." *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2006, pp. 487–505.
- Setterfield, Diane. "Mise en Abyme, Retroaction and Autobiography in André Gide's *Tentative Amoureuse*." *French Studies: A Quarterly Review*, vol. 52, no. 1, Jan. 1998, pp. 58–70.
- Silver, Brenda R. "'Anon' and 'The Reader': Virginia Woolf's Last Essays." *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 25, no. 3/4, 1979, pp. 356–441..
- . "Virginia Woolf and the Concept of Community: The Elizabethan Playhouse." *Women's Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2/3, Jan. 1977, p. 291.
- Simpson, Anna Claire Steffen. *How to Do Things with Children: Children on the Early Modern Stage*. U of Massachusetts Amherst, PhD dissertation, Unfinished.
- Simpson, Anne B. *Territories of the Psyche: The Fiction of Jean Rhys*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Smith, Jean P. "'The Women's Branch of the Commonwealth Relations Office': The Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women and the Long Life of Empire Migration." *Women's History Review*, vol. 25, no. 4, Aug. 2016, pp. 520–35.
- Spengler, Oswald. *The Decline of the West...* Translated by Charles Francis Atkinson, A. A. Knopf, 1926.
- Spotts, Frederic. *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics*. Overlook P, 2003.
- Stegmuller, Francis. "Onward and Upward with the Arts: An Angel, a Flower, a Bird." *The New Yorker Magazine*, vol. 45, Sept. 1969, pp. 130–39.
- Stoler, Ann Laura, editor. *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination*. Duke UP, 2013.

- Suh, Judy. *Fascism and Anti-Fascism in Twentieth-Century British Fiction*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Sullivan, Kelly. "Elizabeth Bowen and 1916: An Architecture of Suspense." *Modernism / Modernity Print+*, vol. 4, no. Cycle 3, Feb. 2020.
<https://modernismmodernity.org/articles/sullivan-1916-architecture-suspense>.
- Walkowitz, Rebecca L. *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism beyond the Nation*. Columbia UP, 2006.
- Warren, Diane. *Djuna Barnes' Consuming Fictions*. Ashgate, 2008.
- Waugh, Evelyn. *Decline and Fall*. Heinemann, 1966.
- Wellek, René. "The Concept of Baroque in Literary Scholarship." Zamora and Kaup, pp. 95-114
- Westman, Karin E. "The Character in the House: Virginia Woolf in Dialogue with History's Audience." *Clio*, vol. 28, no. 1, Fall 1998, pp. 1–27.
- White, Siân. "An Aesthetics of Unintimacy: Narrative Complexity in Elizabeth Bowen's Fictional Style." *Journal of Narrative Theory*, vol. 45, no. 1, Winter 2015, pp. 79–104.
- . "Spatial Politics/Poetics, Late Modernism, and Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September*." *Genre*, vol. 49, no. 1, Apr. 2016, pp. 27–50.
- Winkiel, Laura. "Circuses and Spectacles: Public Culture in 'Nightwood.'" *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 21, no. 1, Summer 1997, pp. 7–28.
- Winks, Robin W. *Europe, 1890-1945: Crisis and Conflict*. Oxford UP, 2003.
- Wölfflin, Heinrich. *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*. Translated by Marie Donald Mackie Hottinger, Dover, 1950.

- . *Renaissance Und Barock: Eine Untersuchung Über Wesen Und Entstehung Des Barockstils in Italien*. Koehler & Amerlang, 1986.
- Woolf, Virginia. "Anon." *The Gender of Modernism*, edited by Bonnie Kime Scott, 1990, pp. 679–96.
- . *Between the Acts*. Edited by Mark Hussey, Cambridge UP, 2011.
- . *Mrs. Dalloway*. Edited by Bonnie Kime Scott, Harcourt, 2005.
- . "Notes on an Elizabethan Play." *The Common Reader: First Series*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1925, pp. 49–58.
- . *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*. Hogarth P, 1977.
- . "The Reader." *The Gender of Modernism*, edited by Bonnie Kime Scott, 1990, pp. 697–701.
- . "Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid." *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942.
- "World War I Casualties." *Wikipedia*, Accessed 28 June 2019.
- https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=World_War_I_casualties&oldid=903871465.
- Worsnop, Judith. "A Reevaluation of 'the Problem of Surplus Women' in 19th-Century England: The Case of the 1851 Census." *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 13, no. 1/2, Jan. 1990, pp. 21–31.
- Zamora, Lois Parkinson, and Monika Kaup, editors. *Baroque New Worlds: Representation, Transculturation, Counterconquest*. Duke UP, 2010.
- Ziarek, Ewa Plonowska. *Feminist Aesthetics and the Politics of Modernism*. Columbia UP, 2012.